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Plaids and Broadwords of the Altamaha

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PLAIDS AND BROADSWORDS ON THE ALTAMAHA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by


Robert K. Weber

1998

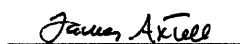
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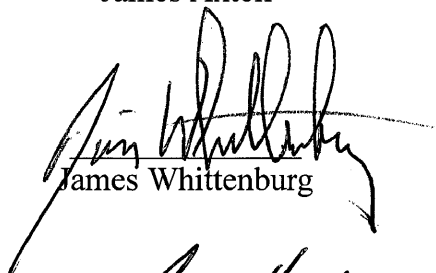
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Approved, July 1998


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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Scottish Highlanders in the founding and early settlement of the colony of Georgia. In order to answer questions regarding their presence it was necessary to conduct an investigation of the history of South Carolina, Georgia, and the southern border of the American colonies during the first decades of the eighteenth century. Included in the investigation of the Georgia Highlanders is a discussion of their culture, participation in the War of Jenkin's Ear (1740-1745), contact with Indians, and the fate of their settlement of Darien.

It was found that nearly three hundred individuals – men, women, and children – were recruited by James Oglethorpe and the governing Trustees of Georgia to leave the Highlands of Scotland and settle on the banks of the Altamaha River, south of Savannah, Georgia. The Trustees recruited these individuals specifically to serve as soldier-settlers to help protect the Georgia frontier from hostile Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Indians.

The result of research reveals that these Highlanders participated fully in the War of Jenkin's Ear, fought between Great Britain and Spain, succeeding in their role of guardians of the southern frontier. Research also reveals that these Highlanders came into frequent contact with the Indians of the region, with whom they shared much in common, and beside whom they often fought. Lastly, it becomes clear that the welfare of the Highlanders' town of Darien was tied closely to the military affairs of the region. Although the Scots were successful in fulfilling their roles as soldiers, this duty conflicted with their occupations as farmers, cattle-herders, and sawyers. Only after the end of the War of Jenkin's Ear were the Highlanders able to firmly establish their community.

PLAIDS AND BROADSWORDS ON THE ALTAMAHA

INTRODUCTION

The founding of the colony of Georgia in 1732 occurred at a crucial time for Britain's American empire and was the result of three seemingly separate, but ultimately intertwined endeavors. The first of these was a philanthropic project conceived by a group of English aristocrats, led by James Edward Oglethorpe, which was concerned over the plight of England's poor and the burden they placed on English society. Oglethorpe and his associates believed that settling a new American colony with England's poor would not only give these individuals new opportunity, it would also strengthen and enrich the empire. Accordingly, the second endeavor was a major interest of any imperial power: increased commerce. The third and perhaps the most driving of the three was the need to defend the American colonies' southern boundary, particularly South Carolina.

Since her founding in the late seventeenth century South Carolina had endured violence and depredation as Britain's southernmost American colony. Armed conflict with hostile Indians to the south and west and the need to defend against the perceived aggressive intentions of the Spanish in Florida and the French in Louisiana had nearly exhausted Carolina's strength and resources. These years of conflict prompted her assembly and inhabitants to petition and plead with her governing Proprietors, as well as the British Crown, to implement more effective policies of defense and fortification.

By 1732, the British government was very aware of the urgent need to defend the region south of the Savannah River and, presented with both a source of settlers through the philanthropic project and the prospects of increased wealth, granted the charter for the

founding of Georgia. The new colony was a product of international colonial rivalry and was originally established by Great Britain as a march colony, or military buffer. Georgia was meant to protect the lucrative British colonies to the north from three distinct threats: the expansionist-minded French to the west, the defensive Spanish to the south, and the several Indian nations native to the area. Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees, understanding the demands of such a situation, pursued three goals toward securing the colony: alliance with Indians, an increased number of white settlers, and military organization and fortification. The continual need for soldier-settlers capable of providing a reliable zone of defense inspired Oglethorpe to look to the rugged Highlands of Scotland. There he found a hardy and warlike people willing to leave the isolation of their native country to settle a colonial backwater, but one with strategic imperial implications.

Nearly three hundred Highland Scots settled in Georgia during the years 1736-1743. Recruited because of their reputation as fierce, reliable, and hardy warriors, they established a new home for themselves on the banks of the Altamaha River, where they continued to live much as they had in Scotland, preserving their social structure and culture and pursuing familiar industries. In the violent early years of the colony's existence, these Highlanders served Oglethorpe and the British Crown well. Not only did they prove their value as warriors, they also founded one of the few settlements that survived Georgia's infancy. The Scots' early years of settlement were difficult ones, however. Their duties as soldiers hampered their ability to meet the Trustees' expectations of quickly and firmly establishing their town of Darien. The settlement

struggled through its first years of existence, but once the Scots were no longer needed to defend the colony, they were able to turn their efforts to building a strong community.

CHAPTER I

The charter of the colony of Georgia, issued by King George II in June 1732, sets forth the reasons for establishing the colony: to allow England's "poor subjects" an opportunity to "gain a comfortable subsistence for themselves and families;" to "increase the trade, navigation, and wealth of these our realms;" to "strengthen our colonies" and "protect all our loving subjects." In order to accomplish these goals, the charter appointed twenty gentlemen to serve as "Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America."¹

The philanthropic concern arose some years earlier in a project that at first seems completely unrelated to the danger and insecurity experienced by British colonists along South Carolina's southern border. In 1729, Parliament appointed James Oglethorpe chairman of a committee to investigate English prison conditions. Oglethorpe came from a well-known Jacobite family, had served as an army officer, and had held a seat in Parliament since 1722, where he showed a strong interest in imperial affairs, gaining the respect of his colleagues who recognized him as honest and independent. He possessed high ambitions and extreme confidence in his own leadership abilities, never doubting that his training and experience would triumph over any problems he might face.² In his role as committee chairman, he discovered not only intense overcrowding in English prisons but also that former prisoners, especially debtors, filled the streets and alleys of

¹ Charter of the Colony, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia I* (1970), 11-12.

² Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, 1-3.

English cities, unable to find work enough to support themselves.³ Oglethorpe, however, had strong faith in the power of British institutions to solve society's evils and believed that men who had failed could succeed if given a second chance, thus his interest in leading the search for a solution to England's widespread poverty.⁴ He and the other committee members felt that a new American colony would provide a welcome refuge for England's urban poor and former prisoners. When the Georgia charter was granted, these philanthropists saw their opportunity, but their plans did meet with reservations.

The biggest concern over settling the new colony with poor British workers regarded the effect it would have on the British economy. Some members of the government feared that mass emigration would deplete Britain's workforce. The authors of several tracts supporting the project made an effective argument against this fear. Argued one of these authors: "[I]f there be any poor, who do not, or cannot add to the riches of their country by labor, they must lie a dead weight on the public . . . these poor should be situated in such places, where they might be easy themselves, and useful to the commonwealth."⁵ Oglethorpe, the author of one of these essays, added weight to the argument when he said, "they who can make life tolerable here are willing to stay at home, as it is indeed best for the kingdom that they should," but those who for whatever reasons have been reduced to poverty should emigrate. Oglethorpe even appealed to the sensibilities of his fellow gentlemen, pointing out the possibility of their losing their wealth: "What various misfortunes may reduce the rich, the industrious, to the danger of a prison, to a moral certainty of starving! These are the people that may relieve

³ Charter of the Colony *CRG I*, 11.

⁴ Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, 3.

themselves and strengthen Georgia, by resorting thither, and Great Britain by their departure.” In Georgia, these people, willing to work, would have land so fertile “that they receive an hundredfold increase for taking very little pains.” According to Oglethorpe’s plan, these unfortunates would emigrate to Georgia at the expense of the Trustees, where they “are unfortunate indeed if [there] they cannot forget their sorrows.”⁶

The Trustees’ philanthropic concerns did not stop at the English Channel; they looked to the continent for a second source of colonists. “The principal concern was to preserve Britain’s working skill and man power; therefore, the only elements within the population which could be sent overseas were those which embarrassed the community, and they should be supplemented with additions from the Continent . . . [t]here was a tendency throughout the eighteenth century to look outside English society proper for emigration material.”⁷ At this time, that “emigration material” came in the person of persecuted European Protestants. Again one of the tract authors articulated the desire to recruit foreign Protestants: “[T]hey have, as well as our own poor a claim on our humanity, notwithstanding the narrow opinions, and mistaken politics of some, who think their charity should begin, continue, and end at home.” This appeals to a perceived English duty, as a Protestant nation, to provide a safe haven of opportunity for persecuted and exiled European Protestants. England itself could not support these refugees, as there was not enough work in England for English laborers, but sending them to Georgia would provide them with economic opportunity and religious freedom and would provide

⁵ “Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia,” *CGHS I*, (1840), 204.

⁶ “A New and Accurate Account of the Provinces of South Carolina, Georgia, &c,” *CGHS I*. 56-58.

Georgia with needed colonists. This same author summed up the argument saying, “How meritorious then will it be in us to preserve the lives of so many fellow citizens and subjects, and gain so many new ones as will be by this colony? Not only preserve their lives, but procure for them ease and affluence? And by this very act of humanity, get so much new wealth for our country, by opening a new spring for our trade?”⁸ This English colonial practice of looking outside “English society proper for emigration material” foreshadows Oglethorpe’s later recruitment of Scottish Highlanders.

A second motivation for founding a new colony was the potential for commercial gain. The philanthropic-minded Trustees were, of course, businessmen and gentlemen, and certainly understood the commercial benefit of a new colony. Specifically, these imperialists hoped that a new colony would increase Britain’s trade and wealth by providing the mother country with products for which she had traditionally relied upon other countries, at great expense. Foremost among the hoped for Georgia exports listed by Oglethorpe were raw silk, wine, oil, cotton, drugs, and dying-stuffs. Not only would Britain be able to acquire these goods more cheaply, producing them would also enrich the growers in Georgia. Oglethorpe also expected Georgia to produce “every vegetable that can be found in the best countries under the same latitude.” The Trustees even hired a botanist to plant and care for such plants.⁹

In the early years of Georgia’s settlement, the Trustees shipped many seeds and plants to the colony in hopes of producing the exotic goods traditionally imported from

⁷ Trevor Richard Reese, *Colonial Georgia: A Study in British Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, Ga., 1963), 11.

⁸ “Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia,” *CGHS 1*, 226, 230.

foreign countries: olive trees, cotton seeds, mulberry plants, burgundy vines, currant vines, barilla seed, bamboo plants, Neapolitan chestnuts, caper plants, and various other vine cuttings. According to the earliest records of Georgia exports, however, few of these endeavors proved successful. The largest exports in the early years were indigenous natural resources such as tar, lumber, casks of potash, caper plants, some vines, and tree bark. Silk, the most highly valued of the potential exports, seems to have started slowly. The first shipment of only eight pounds arrived in April 1735 and was woven into a “piece of Silk, and presented to the Queen.” The second shipment arrived four years later and remained on the Trustees’ account books until 1748. From 1739 to 1750, when the colony was turned over to the Crown, silk production increased, with a shipment arriving in England every one or two years, the largest shipment amounting to just over seventy nine pounds in 1749.¹⁰

The third and final reason for founding Georgia eventually consumed Oglethorpe, the only Trustee ever to visit the colony. By 1729, he and his fellow philanthropists were in contact with the Board of Trade, which at the time was considering a number of proposals for the better fortification of South Carolina’s southern border. The South Carolina Assembly had tried for years to defend the frontier both through their own colonizing efforts south of the Savannah River and by appealing to the British government for assistance. Each attempt had met with obstacles that prevented its success. Nonetheless, the British Crown realized that both a lucrative Indian trade and rice producing region were in jeopardy. Not only that, but with such a vulnerable

⁹ “A New and Accurate Account of the Provinces of South Carolina, Georgia, &c,” *CGHS* 1, 68-69, 72.

southern frontier, and with the balance of power in North America very much in question, a timely attack by either the neighboring French or Spanish could severely damage or even destroy Britain's American empire. Georgia, therefore, was founded for a specific purpose and was the result of a very long process. In order to fully understand why the British government subscribed to the philanthropists' concept of a charity colony, and ultimately why hundreds of Scotch Highlanders settled on its southern borders, one must understand the perilous position of South Carolina and the entire British American empire by 1732.

II

By the early eighteenth century, South Carolinians "had developed into a confident people, extremely warlike," as a result of several years of nearly continuous fighting with Spaniards in Florida and neighboring Indians.¹¹ Carolina planters had developed rice into a lucrative cash crop, and Carolina traders participated in an extensive Indian trade. As one colonial economist wrote, South Carolina's prosperity was built upon "its Soil and Climate, producing a good Staple, the best of Rice; and from a neighboring vast Indian Country affording" Carolinians with captive slaves and "great quantities" of deerskins, some of which the Carolinians used, most of which were shipped to London.¹²

¹⁰ General Account, *CRG 3*, (1970) , 130-336.

¹¹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 5.

¹² William Douglas, *Postscript to a Discourse Concerning the Currencies*, quoted in Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1928), 111. Most of these slaves were captured enemy Indians particularly Choctaws. Crane claims that by 1708 there were 1,400 Indian slaves in Carolina as compared to 2,900 black slaves. He estimates that the number of Indian slaves did not greatly increase thereafter.

Charles Town traders ventured deep into Indian-held lands to conduct business with the Creeks in Alabama and Georgia, the Chickasaws in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the Choctaws in Alabama and Mississippi, the Yamasees in Georgia, and the Cherokees in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.¹³ Although before 1715 these nations were all nominally loyal to the British, the two that ultimately became the most important to the defense of South Carolina and later Georgia were the Creek confederacy and the large and powerful Cherokees.

The Creek confederacy was made up of two branches, the Upper and Lower Creeks. Before 1716 the Lower Creeks numbered 2,400 people, 730 of them men, and lived in ten or eleven towns along the Ochese Creek at the head of the Ocmulgee River. Governor Robert Johnson of South Carolina described these Indians as “great hunters and warriors, who consumed large quantities of English goods.” Among the Lower Creeks, the Cowetas were the most prominent, and many contemporaries considered the Coweta chief as the “emperor” of the entire confederacy. Three factions of Upper Creeks inhabited a sizable area encompassing the upper Alabama River, the Tallapoosa River, and the Coosa River. Appropriately, the Carolinians knew the Upper Creeks by the names of these geographical divisions. This branch of the confederation consisted of about thirty towns, well over four thousand people, and about 1,350 fighting men.¹⁴ The Cherokee nation, significantly larger than the Creek confederacy, sat astride a range of the Blue Ridge Mountains and was divided into four groups: the lower towns, the

¹³ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 5.

¹⁴ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 133-35.

middle towns, the valley towns, and the overhill towns. In 1721, the Cherokees could boast sixty towns in all, with a population over 10,300, of whom some 3,500 were men.¹⁵

By the first decade of the eighteenth century, these two great Indian nations, along with the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Yamasees, found themselves occupying a region between the settlements of British, French, and Spanish colonists. These European powers coveted the Indian trade, not only for the wealth and protection it provided, but also because it deprived the others of that same wealth and protection. The Indians, then, held the balance of power, for wherever the majority of their trading loyalties lay, so did the advantage in this unfolding intercolonial struggle. By the early eighteenth century, that advantage lay with the British in South Carolina. The extensive Charles Town Indian trade was certainly advantageous to South Carolina and the British Empire commercially, but more importantly, many of these Indians grew to become dependent on English trade goods, mainly “coarse woollen cloths and hardware imported from Great Britain.” The Indians likely had no more love for the English than for the French or Spanish, but as Verner Crane argued, “only the excellence of the British trade counterbalanced the superior position and diplomacy of the Spanish and the French.”¹⁶ It was simply a matter of Indian deerskins bringing a better price in England, allowing the traders, in turn, to pay more for them. “[I]ndeed that accidental Advantage has proved of more service than any presents given by the British Nation or Colonies which are in no respect equal to what is given by the French or Spaniards.”¹⁷ Upon these trade relations Carolina built a system of alliances as its first line of defense. “Guarding each of the principal entrances into the

¹⁵ Ibid., 128-132.

¹⁶ Ibid., 115.

colony was a friendly Indian sentry-town, protecting the settlers from attacks by enemy Indians,” as well as from the Spanish and French.¹⁸ In light of South Carolina’s violent history, this bulwark of Indians was even more valuable than the goods acquired in the trade. The *South Carolina Gazette* recognized its significance, reporting in 1736 that “The Indian trade is of the greatest Importance to the Wellfare of this Province . . . as it is the Means by which we keep and maintain the several Nations of the Indians surrounding this Province in Amity and Friendship with us, and thereby prevent their falling into the Interest of France or Spain.”¹⁹ In 1715, however, this human barrier came crashing down on the Carolinians.

From the beginning of South Carolina’s history, her governing Lords Proprietor had endeavored to promote peaceful relations with neighboring Indians through a trade policy regulated by the colonial government. By 1707, however, a developing class of merchants, through representation in South Carolina’s Commons House, managed to gain control over the regulation of the Indian trade, formerly held by the upper house. The trade had become an interest “second only to the exportation of rice” and one in which most Charles Town merchants were involved. The Commons implemented a system of regulation involving a board of commissioners, which was responsible for granting and revoking trading licenses, a secretary, and an agent. The agent held the real power, for he lived among the Indians with instructions to supervise the traders’ morals, uphold their influence over the Indians, preserve peace between tribes in the Carolina alliance, and “convert as many Nations of Indians as possible” to friendship with Carolina. The

¹⁷ James Crockatt, memorial to the Board of Trade, 10 Nov. 1752, quoted in Crane, 115.

¹⁸ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 5.

problem with this system was the traders themselves. Many of them engaged in abusive practices: enslaving free Indians, selling rum to Indians, supplying hostile Indians with ammunition, allowing the great accumulation of Indian debt, and operating without licenses. These abuses came to the attention of the Commons, which planned a general reformation, but as Crane so eloquently put it, “the Indians within a few months undertook a reformation of the trade in their own drastic and terrible fashion.”²⁰

Yamasee warriors attacked Pocotaligo Town on 15 April 1715, and since the Yamasee alliance was essential to the defense of the southern border, their initial attack on Carolina traders and settlements was all the more shocking to the British. Although the plot was likely initiated by Emperor Brims of Coweta, it soon involved a huge conspiracy of Upper and Lower Creeks and Choctaws, as well as Yamasees. Most disturbing, however, were reports that the Cherokees, thought to be firm allies, had joined in the assault. In one stroke, the attackers killed traders and destroyed the border settlements, sending a flood of refugees into Charles Town.²¹ The Creeks then broke through South Carolina’s defenses and destroyed many plantations southwest of Charles Town.²² The attacks came as a response to the abuses that many Indians had suffered at the hands of traders which had not been redressed by the trading commission.

Quick and effective response by Carolina and Virginia militia, in conjunction with timely diplomacy, saved South Carolina from complete destruction. The attackers were quickly beaten back and efforts were made to regain the friendship and aid of Carolina’s

¹⁹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 115.

²⁰ Ibid., 120-21, 152-53.

²¹ Ibid., 162-70.

²² Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 6.

former allies. The Chickasaws held firm to their English alliance, and the Cherokees reaffirmed their friendship only after a courageous expedition into the heart of their territory by Colonel Maurice Moore and three hundred men.²³ Only the Creeks and Yamasees remained hostile to the British. The Lower Creeks migrated westward to the Chatahoochee River, and although they soon reached an official peace agreement with the British, they pursued a policy of neutrality and opened trade with the French. The Yamasees abandoned their lands in what would soon become Georgia, retreating to the protection of the fort at St. Augustine, in Spanish Florida, where they received goods and ammunition from the Spaniards.

As a result of the war and subsequent migrations, South Carolina's position by 1720 was precarious indeed. The shield of friendly Indian sentry-towns had disappeared, and many of these same Indians, particularly Creeks and Yamasees, now posed a threat. The southern frontier had been depopulated by the Indian attacks, and for years remained vulnerable to Yamasee raids. Much of the Indian trade and the influence that it allowed were lost. Over the course of the next decade, South Carolina's efforts focused on rebuilding a protective network of Indian alliances through trade. British negotiators and traders eventually succeeded in reconvincing Emperor Brims of the superiority of British trade and in establishing a somewhat stable alliance with both the Upper and Lower

²³ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 180-82. Before this expedition, the Cherokees had agreed to a treaty of alliance and aid against the Creeks, but then hesitated to cooperate. Moore's expedition revealed a division within the Cherokee nation, but produced a peace summit between the Carolinians, the Cherokees, the Creeks, and the Yamasees. The Creek delegation was three weeks late in arriving, and when it did arrive, its members attempted to persuade the Cherokees to join them in an attack on the Carolinian army that would likely have been fatal to that colony. The Cherokees responded by massacring the

Creek towns. This was aided by a crushing British victory in 1728 over the Yamasees, who, after refusing to re-ally with the British, were saved from total destruction only by retreating to the safety of St. Augustine's guns. The Cherokees, although courted heavily by the French, recommitted to British loyalty, even sending a delegation to England in 1730, where they signed a treaty of alliance submitting to the Crown's authority.

Worse yet were the implications that the Yamasee War had for British relations with the Spanish and French. Adding support to rumors that they had instigated the war, it became clear that neither of these powers had failed to take advantage of South Carolina's weakened position. The Spanish, "from negligible rivals, had become formidable contenders for the alliance of the Creek Indians," in turn strengthening the Creek bargaining position.²⁴ Considered more an immediate threat to South Carolina, however, were the French. French colonists established the small colony of Louisiana in 1698, and, supported by an alliance with the Choctaws, resisted South Carolina's efforts to drive them out during Queen Anne's War (1701-13). Now, they took advantage of this latest war by making great diplomatic inroads with the Upper Creeks, who allowed the construction of Fort Toulouse among the Alabamas. The construction of this fort in 1717 convinced the Carolinians of French expansionist intentions and raised the fear that the French had plans to "isolate the British colonies against the Atlantic coast by a fence of garrisoned forts."²⁵

Creek and Yamasee emissaries, and the divisions and hesitations among them disappeared.

²⁴ Ibid., 185.

²⁵ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 7.

In the early days of the Yamasee War, colonial governors from New York to South Carolina were on the verge of panic, fearing a general Indian uprising, supported by the French, against all the British colonies. In the face of this threat, the Carolina assembly sent agents to London to inform the Board of Trade of South Carolina's position as a frontier and potential "bulwark to all his Majesties Collonys on the South West part of the Continent against the French, Spaniards and Indians." They also related the fear of French encirclement, describing "the Designs of the French to Extend their Settlements form Canada to Mississippi behind the British Plantations." Governor Alexander Spotswood of the royal colony of Virginia expressed similar fears when he wrote to the Board regarding the danger of French encirclement if they completed "their connections from Canada to the Gulf [of Mexico]." William Keith, deputy-governor of Pennsylvania, was also convinced of French plans to draw a circle around the British colonies and expel them from the continent, and he too expressed his concerns to the home government. Colonel Robert Johnson, one-time governor of South Carolina, wrote to the Board that if war with France reopened, Carolina "would fall an easy Prey to them and very probably Virginia, New York, and the other Plantations to which this Colony is a Frontier, would feel the effects of the French growing so powerfull in America."²⁶

Even private individuals in England recognized the value of the southern colonies and the danger that they faced. Joshua Gee, a London merchant wrote as late as 1729 describing Carolina as "the most improveable, in my Apprehension, of any of our Colonies; yet because it is the Property of particular Persons [the Lords Proprietors], supplies us with little more than one Commodity of Rice (tho' it is capable of many other

²⁶ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 209-27.

valuable ones) and is liable to be overrun by the French, Spaniards, and Indians, for want of a sufficient Protection.”²⁷ Whether or not the French did indeed have such grandiose imperial plans is irrelevant. The fact that so many colonial leaders feared French expansion and recognized the relative defenselessness of South Carolina after the Yamasee War was enough to call to the attention of the Board of Trade and the Crown the need to increase defenses along the Savannah River.

In addition to the efforts at restoring the Indian trade alliances, the South Carolina government developed a system of frontier defense consisting of several small forts guarding the major land and water entrances to the colony. These forts were supported by three ranger companies, “who patrolled the forest paths on horseback” and were stationed at plantations guarding the northern, western, and southern approaches to Charles Town. This system only included about one hundred men, and although it was probably sufficient to guard against Indian attack, any sizable French assault or effort to fortify the area south of the Savannah could not be repelled by this tiny force.²⁸ The only effective way to defend the southern frontier from French encroachment was to settle and fortify the lands south of the Savannah, before the French did. As early as 1717, a Scottish baronet, Sir Robert Montgomery, proposed a new colony between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers, to consist of “compact fortified settlements.”²⁹ Accepted by both the Proprietors and the Board of Trade, the project nonetheless faltered for lack of investors and disappeared by 1720.

²⁷ Ibid., 315.

²⁸ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 7.

²⁹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 211.

In that year, Colonel John Barnwell, an experienced South Carolina soldier, approached the British government with a plan to settle and fortify the frontier that included the provision by the government of a battalion of regular British soldiers to help build a “screen of forts to counter French expansion.”³⁰ Prompted by the Lords Proprietors’ closing their land grant office in 1719, as well as their apparent inability to provide for southern defense, the colonial government of Carolina persuaded the Proprietors to give over provisional control of the colony to the Crown. The Carolinians hoped that the royal government would prove more receptive to Carolina’s petitions for defense. The Crown did, in fact, accept Barnwell’s plan and in 1721 the first of these fortifications, Fort King George, was erected at the mouth of the Altamaha. Barnwell had argued, apparently effectively, that the French planned to claim a right to that river. “Therefore,” he recommended, “it wou’d be more immediately necessary for Us to possess ourselves of the Mouth of that River.”³¹ The remainder of the plan never came to fruition and even Fort King George proved useless because the Crown provided not an effective fighting force but a single company of one hundred invalids, half of them ill with scurvy. Due to increased Yamasee raids before their defeat in 1728, this garrison was withdrawn north of the Savannah, leaving the frontier all but unguarded once again.³²

³⁰ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 7.

³¹ *Journal of the Board of Trade* 16 Aug. 1720; quoted in Crane, 229.

³² Yet another attempt at colonizing south of the Savannah was undertaken in 1724, this time by a Swiss entrepreneur named Jean Pierre Purry, who proposed a Swiss colony upon the southern boundary. Furthermore, he proposed that the English should secure the area that he called an American Paradise, both to strengthen South Carolina and to serve as a barrier colony. As had previous such attempts, this one failed, not for lack of support from the Carolina Assembly, which was nearly desperate for improved defense, nor from disapproval by the Board of Trade, but from the obstacles created by the Lords Proprietors, who still held title to the colony's charter.

Although Fort King George failed to provide adequate defense along the southern frontier, it succeeded in reviving a long-dormant border dispute between Britain and Spain. The British built the fort in response to a perceived French threat, but in so doing they intensified what had only been a nominal Spanish threat, bringing Spain squarely into the three-way intercolonial struggle for supremacy in North America. This struggle would not end until 1763 with the expulsion of the French and Spanish from much of the continent. The Spanish had settled at St. Augustine a century before the arrival of British colonists in Carolina and had also established the mission province of Guale in the Altamaha region. Of course, animosity between England and Spain was not new to the eighteenth century, and they shared “a common dislike stemming from religious differences and imperial clashes.” England’s power was on the rise and Spain’s on the decline by the late seventeenth century when conflict erupted between the two surrounding a dispute over the proper boundaries of South Carolina, which the English claimed extended as far south as the Spanish mission provinces and even St. Augustine. The Spaniards responded in 1686 by destroying the two-year-old Scottish settlement of Stuart’s Town on Port Royal Island in South Carolina. The Carolinians, in turn, attacked St. Augustine at the outbreak of Queen Anne’s War, and although unsuccessful in this attack, continued to raid the mission provinces. By the end of the war, Spanish Florida was in a “dismal condition” and the Spaniards withdrew into present-day Florida but never gave up their claim to Guale.³³ So, when the Carolinians built Fort King George at the mouth of the Altamaha, the Spanish saw it as a “flagrant intrusion” into their

³³ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 3-4.

territory.³⁴ For the next several years, negotiations highlighted by Yamasee raids into South Carolina, focused on settling this decades old dispute.³⁵ By 1730, the negotiations had resolved nothing. The Carolinians clung uncompromisingly to the claim that their charter granted them all the land south of the Altamaha, all the way to St. Augustine, even going so far as to say that the Spanish had never made attempts to occupy this region. This claim, of course, ignored the mission provinces. The Spanish, on the other hand, did not give up their claim to the same land based on the 1670 Treaty of Madrid, which, if enforced, would have restricted the British to the land immediately surrounding Charles Town—a concession the Carolinians would never make.

By the end of the 1720s, South Carolinians faced a very dangerous situation: their relations with many former Indian allies were shaky at best (relations with the Yamasees were completely hostile), they feared French efforts to encircle them, and they were embroiled in a long-standing and intensifying border dispute with the Spanish. The Carolina colonial government certainly saw the need for the Crown to incorporate the southern frontier into concerns and policies for imperial strategy, but so far, efforts at colonizing south of the Savannah had proven unproductive. Many Carolinians attributed this failure to the ineptitude of the Lords Proprietors. The shifting of provisional control to the Crown in 1719 had at least resulted in the construction of Fort King George and had awakened the Crown to the need to protect the southern frontier or face French encirclement. Likewise, not until the Proprietors finally relinquished title to the charter,

³⁴ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 238.

³⁵ These raids were put to an end by the British defeat of the Yamasee in 1728 mentioned above.

and thus complete control, of South Carolina in 1729 were positive steps taken to sufficiently defend the southern frontier.

The Crown appointed former Proprietary governor Robert Johnson as royal governor of South Carolina and he immediately revived Barnwell's plan for establishing townships along the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. The Board of Trade and the Privy Council both approved this plan in its entirety. The reasoning behind the plan was articulated by the author of "Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia." He argued: "As towns are established, and grow populous along the rivers Savannah, and Alatomaha, they will make such a barrier, as will render the southern provinces of the British colonies on the continent of America, safe from Indian, and other enemies."³⁶ Johnson recognized the need to achieve three goals in order to secure the frontier: friendship with the Indians (particularly the Cherokees), military organization and fortification, and more white settlers.³⁷ In just a few years, Oglethorpe would adopt and pursue these same goals in his efforts to secure the new colony of Georgia.

In accordance to Johnson's plan, the Board of Trade ordered the establishment of eleven townships, seven north of the Savannah, two on the Savannah, and two on the Altamaha. Only nine were actually established immediately, and all of them lay north of the Savannah, within the present boundaries of South Carolina. The Carolinians, unwilling to extend the frontier south and west of the Savannah River and face certain conflict with the Spaniards, did not establish the prescribed Altamaha townships.³⁸ The

³⁶ *CGHS 1*, 224.

³⁷ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 292.

³⁸ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 10.

building of these settlements would have to wait for the founding of Georgia and the coming of Oglethorpe's Highlanders.

The same year (1730) that the Board of Trade instructed Governor Johnson to colonize the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers, the plan for southern frontier defense converged with the philanthropic project led by Oglethorpe, John, Lord Percival, and Dr. Thomas Bray. The philanthropists' project of establishing a charitable colony fit nicely with the acknowledged need for defense. The common failing of earlier attempts to colonize south of the Savannah was the lack of a sufficient supply of colonists and of national support. With the emergence of a strong and organized philanthropic movement, the needed impulse was added to the imperialistic goals of Carolina and the British government. These separate endeavors merged not just through fortunate happenstance but through the concerted efforts of members of the Board of Trade and the philanthropists.

Bray and Oglethorpe acted out of charity and a desire for social reform, but they both certainly understood the need for frontier defense. Bray, who was interested in establishing Christian missions in Indian territories, realized that this method would build up a barrier between British settlements and "barbarous Indians." Oglethorpe, serving as chairman of the committee investigating prison conditions, saw the opportunity to pursue social reform, but within the context of his other interest in developing British colonies. In fact, he first suggested the idea of a charitable colony in America during a meeting with Percival in February 1730. Percival recorded the scheme in his diary, which was to obtain land in America, either by purchase or government grant, "and to plant thereon a hundred miserable wretches who being let out of gaol . . . are now starving about the

town for want of employment . . . [I]n time they with their families would increase so fast as to become a security and defence of our possessions against the French and Indians of those parts.”³⁹

No individual had yet mentioned a precise location for a colony of this sort. However, Oglethorpe and Percival met again just two weeks after the Board of Trade issued its settlement instructions to Governor Johnson. At this meeting, they made the first specific mention of the Carolina region as a potential site for their colony. Add to this the fact that for the previous three months members of the Board of Trade had worked with Oglethorpe in his prison investigations, and “the process whereby the charitable colony came to be fixed in that segment of the frontier, and assimilated for a time to the Barnwell-Johnson township scheme, becomes fairly obvious.”⁴⁰ The two projects converged: the need for defense provided the vehicle through which the charitable colony came into being, and the philanthropic project provided the colonists needed to secure the southern frontier. Imperialistic needs for defense determined the precise location of Oglethorpe’s colony. The philanthropists signed a petition to the king and Privy Council on 30 July 1730 requesting a grant of land south and west of the Savannah.

The request for land that would become Georgia was the continuation, extension, and final fulfillment of both Carolinian expansion and defense policies and British imperialistic anti-French and anti-Spanish policies. Philanthropy made the founding of Georgia possible, but the new colony came to fruition as a strategic imperialistic move.

³⁹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 308, 314.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 318.

The importance of Georgia's founding must be viewed within this strategic context, for defense soon became the primary goal of the Georgia Trustees and of Oglethorpe himself.

III

The British Crown granted the philanthropists' request in 1732, establishing Georgia as a military barrier colony. Pursuant to this goal, the rules and laws established by both the charter and the Trustees aimed at providing for the defense of the new colony, which contained all of the land between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers and west from the heads of these rivers. The charter granted the Trustees control of the military organization of the colony, giving them the power to appoint officers "to train, instruct, exercise and govern, a Militia, for the special Defence and Safety of the said Colony, to assemble in martial Array, and put in warlike Posture the Inhabitants of the said Colony." More military provisions were prescribed, instructing the Trustees to "erect Forts, and fortify any Place or Places within the said Colony, and the same to furnish with all necessary Ammunition, Provision, and Stores of War, for Offence and Defence." The Trustees could also delegate the authority to "kill, slay, and destroy, and conquer by all fitting ways, enterprises and means whatsoever, all and every such person or persons as shall at any time hereafter, in any hostile manner, attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment or annoyance of our said colony."⁴¹

In addition to providing for the organization and operation of the militia and for building fortifications, the charter also gave the Trustees great power over settlement and land distribution policies. The Trustees could "transport and convey into the said Province" any British subjects or foreigners willing to go and grant them land there. The

system of land distribution established by the Trustees provided for the colony's defense in a not much more subtle manner than did the building of forts. The Trustees "consider'd each Inhabitant, both as a Planter and as a Soldier; and they were therefore to be provided with Arms for their Defence, as well as tools for their Cultivation, and to be taught the Exercise of both. And as the Military Strength of the Province was particularly to be taken care of," land was granted in fifty acre lots, each "considered as a military Fief," which the grantees could not buy or sell, preventing the accumulation of more than one lot per person. The Trustees feared that any large accumulation of land would diminish the number of men in the settlement, thus diminishing the colony's defensive capabilities. Each lot was granted in tail male, which meant that only male heirs could inherit. This policy, too, aimed at defense, for the Trustees were wary of women owning land because they were "incapable . . . to act as Soldiers." The Trustees planned to enlarge the land tenure policy once the province reached a secure state. Finally, towns were to be established in close proximity to the farmlands and to operate as the settlers' garrisons.⁴²

In a further effort to provide for Georgia's security, the Trustees forbade the ownership or employ of Negroes, articulating several reasons for this policy. First, the cost of a slave equalled the cost of transporting a white man to the colony, and therefore denied the colony an additional planter-soldier. Second, the Spaniards at St. Augustine would try to entice slaves to escape or, worse yet, to revolt. Third, if those who emigrated at their own expense were allowed to purchase slaves, those poor who

⁴¹ Charter of the Colony, *CRG 1*, 24-25.

depended on the charity of the Trustees and upon whom the defense of the colony depended would leave Georgia when they were refused slaves of their own. Fourth, if Georgians possessed Negroes, it would “facilitate the Desertion of the Carolina Negroes, thro’ the Province of Georgia; and consequently this Colony, instead of proving a Frontier, and adding a Strength to the Province of South Carolina, would be a Means of drawing off the slaves of Carolina, and adding thereby a Strength to Augustine.”⁴³

The measures taken for the founding of Georgia, therefore, constituted a conscious effort to establish a compact and defensive-minded settlement to secure the region between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. Often, however, reality can fall far short of an ideal. No doubt the Trustees had every intention of making rules that would best serve their purposes, but only Oglethorpe ventured to Georgia and had to implement and enforce these policies. The wilds of coastal eighteenth-century Georgia proved to be understandably different from the refinement of the Trustees’ London offices, but Oglethorpe enthusiastically and courageously pursued the goal of securing the infant colony, and therefore South Carolina and the other southern colonies, against encroachment from French, Spanish, or Indian enemies. By adopting Governor Johnson’s three-pronged policy of organizing defenses and fortifications, establishing friendly relations with Indians, and increasing the number of white settlers, Oglethorpe and his Georgians assumed the full mantle of responsibility for defending British America’s southern frontier.

⁴² This paragraph is a summary of “An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia,” *CRG* 3, 372-75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 377-78.

V

“The *Ann* Galley, of above 200 Tons, is on the point of sailing from Deptford, for the new colony of *Georgia*, with 35 Families, consisting of Carpenters, Bricklayers, Farmers, &c. who take all proper Instruments. The men were learning Military Discipline of the Guards, as must all that go thither, and to carry Musquets, Bayonets, and Swords, to defend the Colony in case of an attack from the Indians.”⁴⁴

Thus, the first group of 114 soldier-settlers prepared to make the long journey from London to Georgia. The Trustees had hand-picked these people and paid out four pounds sterling for each person’s crossing. After some delay, the *Ann* sailed from Gravesend on 17 November 1732, and arrived off the coast of Carolina in mid-January.⁴⁵ While the new colonists waited patiently at Beaufort, South Carolina, Oglethorpe, having accompanied the settlers, set off to “view the Savannah River” and to locate an acceptable site to construct Georgia’s first British settlement. He eventually “fixed upon a healthy Situation, about Ten Miles from the Sea. The River here forms an Half-moon, also on the South side of which the Banks are about Forty Feet high, and on the Top a Flat, which they call a Bluff.” On this bluff, as far from the Spaniards at St. Augustine and as close to Carolina as possible, Oglethorpe laid out the town of Savannah.⁴⁶ The new Georgians arrived at the site on the first of February, accompanied by a fifteen-man South Carolina ranger company, commanded by the forty-five-year-old Captain James McPherson. Governor Johnson of Carolina had ordered McPherson southward from Saltcatchers Fort on the Combahee River to Savannah to “Cover and protect that Settlement from any insults.”⁴⁷ The settlers must have reacted to their new environment with a mixture of fear, excitement, and awe. Used to the crowded squalor of eighteenth-century London,

⁴⁴ *Gentlemen’s Magazine* (London), Oct. 1732, 1029, quoted in Sarah B. G. Temple and Kenneth Coleman, *Georgia Journeys*, (Athens, Ga., 1961) 2.

⁴⁵ Two infant boys died on the voyage.

⁴⁶ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 10 Feb. 1733, *CRG* 3, 380.

the “vast Woods of Pine-trees,” many over seventy feet tall, the fresh water of the Savannah, the openness of the bluff, and the unobstructed view to the sea must have made quite an impression.⁴⁸

Not to mention the impression McPherson and his rugged Carolina rangers made on native Englishmen and women used to the smartly dressed soldiers they had seen in England. These rangers, by comparison, rode small mud-splattered Spanish horses—accoutered with unpolished saddles—were unshaven after a three-day journey, and wore woolen or fox-fur caps and a non-uniform assortment of shirts, waistcoats, coats, and buckskin breeches and leggings. They carried flintlock carbines, pistols, knives and hatchets—all necessary weapons in the dangerous frontier environment. Despite their unsoldierly appearance, the rangers performed their duties with expert efficiency. Many of them had served as rangers for four or more years, were veterans of clashes with Indians, and had adopted the Indians’ method of warfare. Ranger companies made up the backbone of South Carolina’s defenses, patrolling the Yamasee warpaths, and would soon serve Georgia as valuable defenders and models for her own defense system.⁴⁹

With McPherson’s Southern Rangers as protection, Savannah’s founders set straight to work building their new town. In accordance with the charter, the Trustees supplied those settlers who emigrated on the Trustees’ charity with a musket and bayonet, along with tools needed for farming and building settlements. In addition, the Trustees required such people to “work and labour in clearing their Lands, making Habitations,

⁴⁷ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 11.

⁴⁸ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 10 Feb. 1733, *CRG* 3, 381.

⁴⁹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 13-16.

and necessary Defences, and in all other Works for the common Good .”⁵⁰ And following the charter’s instructions regarding land distribution, settlers in town were granted sixty-by-ninety-foot lots and those in the country and later in villages received the prescribed fifty acres, which were to lie close together. Again, the Trustees felt that such compact towns and villages would better suit the needs for defense. More important, however, Oglethorpe immediately set the settlers to fortifying Savannah by raising palisades and building a battery of cannon, “which command[ed] the River, some Distance below the Town.”⁵¹ Torrential cold rains that fell that February made this work all the more difficult, but Oglethorpe’s enthusiasm and leadership abilities kept the weary settlers at their work.⁵² They unloaded the boats, felled trees, sowed seeds, and built houses and an armory. In short, they hacked a respectable town out of the wilderness. Samuel Eveleigh, a Charles Town merchant, visited the infant town in March and published his observances in the *South Carolina Gazette*. “Mr. Oglethorpe is indefatigable, takes a vast deal of Pains He is extremely well beloved by all his People; the general Title they give him is Father . . . He keeps a strict Discipline . . . There are no Idlers there” Eveleigh also remarked on the palisade and the show of small arms and “Five Cannon.”⁵³

Faced with the reality of Georgia’s precarious situation and the ever-present threat of attack, Oglethorpe soon became completely engrossed in fortifying the entire region. Beyond Savannah’s immediate defensive works, he sought to establish stronger and more far-reaching defenses, and with the cooperation of South Carolina’s Governor Johnson

⁵⁰ Rules for the Year 1735, *CRG* 3, 407-09.

⁵¹ “An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia,” *CRG* 3, 382.

⁵² Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 13.

⁵³ *South Carolina Gazette*, 22 March 1733.

and that colony's ranger forces, the Georgia leader quickly secured the southern and western approaches to Savannah. By doing so, Oglethorpe sought to fulfill the colony's original purpose: defending the frontier and relieving South Carolinians of the threat of attack. McPherson's rangers were on something of a long-term loan to the Georgians. In the summer of 1733, Oglethorpe employed them in building a fort on the banks of the Ogeechee River, west of Savannah, to guard an old Yamasee warpath. Although midway through the construction they realized that they had obstructed the river with their scrap timber and had to start over at a different site, the rangers completed Fort Argyle by Christmas of that year. It stood on the west bank of the river and was a typical frontier fort—square, with diamond shaped bastions on the landward corners, protected by wooden palisades, a dry moat, and earthen walls. Oglethorpe gave McPherson a Georgia commission and ordered the rangers to remain at Fort Argyle as a garrison force. The abandoned fort remained, referred to as First Fort. Early in 1734, South Carolina sent five reinforcements to the rangers under the command of William Elbert, who also received a Georgia commission and garrisoned First Fort with half of the now twenty rangers.

With the construction of these two forts south of the Savannah, the old South Carolina forts became less essential and Governor Johnson ordered more of his rangers to Georgia. A company under Aneas Mackintosh, a Scottish gentleman and heir to the chiefdom of the Highland Clan Chattan, had been garrisoned at Fort Prince George several miles upriver from Savannah, guarding the same Yamasee warpath that Fort Argyle now guarded. When McPherson left for Georgia, Johnson ordered Mackintosh to reinforce Saltcatchers but soon transferred him again to Fort Argyle, ordering Saltcatchers

to be burned. Before this order could be carried out, Johnson changed his mind and relocated Mackintosh yet again, this time ordering him back to Fort Prince George where he had begun. In 1735, when the Carolina Assembly refused to pay for Mackintosh's rangers any longer, Oglethorpe assumed responsibility for them and incorporated them into Georgia's growing forces.

The second of the three prongs of Johnson's and Oglethorpe's plan for securing the frontier was establishing good relations with Indians. The Georgia colonists certainly did not find, nor did they expect to find, an uninhabited land when they arrived. The by-laws passed by the Trustees show their desire to establish firm alliances and trade with the neighboring nations, for they understood, as did Carolina officials, that the key to supremacy in the region was friendship with the Indians.⁵⁴ In 1730, seven Cherokee representatives had traveled to England and signed a treaty of alliance. The British had always valued the Cherokees' friendship, since this nation lay between them and many hostile tribes to the north, and recognized "the value to the intended colony [Georgia] of the amity of the Cherokee." The treaty acknowledged Cherokee subjection to the British Crown, formed military and trading alliances, and forbade the Cherokees to trade with other Europeans.⁵⁵ Before Oglethorpe even set foot on Georgia soil, he could be assured of Cherokee friendship, trade, and aid in defense. The region surrounding Savannah, however, did not belong to the Cherokees but to the Creeks and Yamasees.

The Georgians did not immediately encounter either of these nations. Instead, Oglethorpe wrote of "a little Indian Nation, the only one within Fifty Miles, [which] is

⁵⁴ By-Laws and Laws of the Colony of Georgia, *CRG I*, 31-42.

⁵⁵ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 297.

not only at Amity, but desirous to be Subjects to his Majesty King George, to have Lands given them among us, and to breed their Children at our Schools.”⁵⁶ These were the Yamacraw Indians, about one hundred people of mixed Creek and Yamasee blood, led by an old chief, Tomochichi, who lived on the bluff that the Georgians now occupied. As prepared as he was to make gifts of friendship to the Yamacraws, Oglethorpe did not expect the welcome that the colonists received. A delegation soon came to welcome the settlers, “and before them came a Man dancing in Antick Postures with a spread Fan of white Feathers in each hand as a Token of friendship . . . Then the King and all the men came in a regular manner & Shook [Oglethorpe] by the hand; after that the Queen came and all the Women did the like.”⁵⁷ Tomochichi then presented Oglethorpe with a gift of a buffalo skin with an eagle’s head painted on the inside. This symbol stood for the superior strength of the English and asked for English protection. Tomochichi also ceded the land for Savannah, and Oglethorpe accepted two companies of Yamacraw warriors, about forty men, into Georgia’s defense forces.⁵⁸

Oglethorpe knew that in order to secure the new settlement he must gain the friendship of the more numerous, more powerful, and potentially more dangerous Creeks. He also knew that, based on Carolina’s recent shaky relations with the Creeks, obtaining a pledge of friendship could be difficult. However, during a meeting with fifty-four Lower Creeks, he forged “a treaty of alliance, friendship and commerce, to last as long as the sun shines or the waters run in the rivers.” Oglethorpe, pleased with the results,

⁵⁶ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 10 Feb. 1733, *CRG* 3, 380-81.

⁵⁷ Thomas Causton to his wife, 12 March 1733, quoted in Temple and Coleman, *Georgia Journeys*, 17-18.

⁵⁸ Temple and Coleman, *Georgia Journeys*, 17-18.

wrote, “The Creeks adhere firmly to us.”⁵⁹ The next year, 1734, several Lower Creeks traveled to England in an effort to ensure fair trading practices, which resulted in the Trustees’ passing an “Act for maintaining the Peace with the Indians in the Province of Georgia.”⁶⁰ The friendship of the Lower Creeks would prove valuable in future conflict with the Spaniards.

The Georgians also attempted to secure the loyalty of the Upper Creeks, who were generally friendly toward the British. However, since building Fort Toulouse among the Alabamas, the French constantly attempted to gain influence over the remaining two Upper Creek factions. If that happened, and the French disrupted the Charles Town Indian trade, the British would lose their only source of influence and the Upper Creeks might ally with the Choctaws and the French and destroy South Carolina as well as the infant colony. The South Carolina Assembly wished to construct a fort to counter Fort Toulouse, but sensing that the Upper Creeks would not tolerate Carolina soldiers, requested that Oglethorpe direct an expedition to the Upper Creeks and even offered to pay for it.

Eager to ally with the Upper Creeks as well as to acquire control over the trade with the Creeks inside Georgia’s boundaries, Oglethorpe organized an independent company under the command of Patrick Mackay, an indebted Scottish gentleman from the Highland county of Sutherland.⁶¹ Oglethorpe not only instructed Mackay to negotiate

⁵⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁰ “An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia,” *CRG* 3, 384.

⁶¹ Mackay had come to Georgia in 1733 with his three brothers, Hugh, James, and Charles, and settled upriver from Savannah at Josephs Town. His nephew, Hugh Mackay, Jr., was appointed ensign of the new company, and would later serve as commander of one of the Highland units organized before the War of Jenkin's Ear.

with the Upper Creeks for a British fort in the area but gave him the authority to regulate traders and require them to obtain a Georgia trading license, instead of the South Carolina license many of them already held. Oglethorpe possessed no authority to do this, as the Trustees had not yet assumed control over trade. In his defense, however, he recognized the need to secure this trade, knowing the strategic benefits it carried. Mackay did succeed in building a British fort at Okfuskee, a principal Upper Creek town, but in the process he infuriated the South Carolina government in his attempts to exceed his strictly military goals. Obtaining part of the Indian trade may have been necessary for Georgia's financial and military survival, but in attempting it, Mackay opened a rift with Carolina that never fully healed.

Lastly, Oglethorpe and the Trustees continually sought to reinforce the new colony with more immigrants. At the end of the first year of settlement, the settlers sent to Georgia on the Trustees' charity numbered 152.⁶² For several years to come, Parliament continued to provide funds for increased settlement and the Trustees continued to transport individuals, both British and foreign Protestants, just as originally planned. By the summer of 1735, the third year of Georgia's history, the Trustees had sent on their charity 574 individuals, including 173 foreign Protestants. A significant

⁶² As word reached England about the pleasantness and early successes of the colony, some amusing events transpired. The Trustees learned that individuals had gone about England offering land and money in Georgia in the Trustees' names, but without that body's knowledge. The Trustees were forced to publish advertisements in newspapers to warn people of these false solicitations, declaring "that they had never given such Power to any Persons whatsoever; and that they never used any Solicitations to induce People to go over," *CRG* 3, 383.

number of individuals emigrated at their own expense as well and received a total of over twelve thousand acres.⁶³

By 1735, Georgia could boast three lines of defense. The outermost consisted of the two Yamacraw companies responsible for guarding the crossings of the Altamaha River, some miles south of Savannah. Behind them, Captain McPherson's rangers, garrisoned at Fort Argyle, patrolled the west bank of the Ogeechee, Lieutenant Elbert's detachment at First Fort patrolled between the Ogeechee and the Savannah, and Captain Mackintosh's Fort Prince George garrison patrolled up and down the east bank of the Savannah. The final line of defense was the Georgia militia, consisting of the 397 male residents of Savannah and of several small, fortified villages that had sprung up southeast and southwest of Savannah. In addition to these land forces, Georgia also had use of the scout boat *Carolina*, which guarded the Inland Passage, the main invasion route from the south.

Despite these defenses, Georgians found themselves with a vulnerable southern border by 1735. Dependable Indian allies were few, the ranger companies were small and spread out, and the tiny militia force lacked efficient organization as well as the firepower to repel a significant French or Spanish invasion force. Although Carolina promised support from its three thousand-man militia, they were preoccupied with the fear of slave revolts and could not be counted on. In 1734, the South Carolina Assembly sent a petition to King George relating to him the dangerous position of both South Carolina and Georgia. The petition includes descriptions of the "vast Number of French and Indians" which threatened the colonies, and reveals the comparative weakness of the combined

⁶³ "An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia," *CRG3*, 382-86.

militias of Carolina and Georgia, which amounted to only 3,500 men.⁶⁴ Although the situation had improved and the march colony continued to grow, both Georgians and Carolinians still felt vulnerable to attack. Georgia needed more soldier-settlers.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 413-19.

CHAPTER II

"To distant climes, a dreary scene they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe."¹

Ten oar blades quietly churned the turbid water as the large, double-ended, cypress scout boat *Carolina* finally neared its destination, a bluff overlooking the swampy Altamaha River less than five miles from where it opens to the sea.² The journey from St. Simon's Island had taken three hours, and the oarsmen, although warmed by the rowing on this February day, were probably happy to have on board a group of Indian warriors willing to share the workload.³ The crew's leader had just spent four days on St. Simon's beginning the work of building and fortifying the new settlement of Frederica. He was eager to reach the newest British settlement south of the Savannah River, "the Scotch Settlement which they desire may be called Darien."⁴ The men in the *Carolina* could see activity on the bluff and likely could hear the ring of axes chopping wood and the thud of hammers hitting nails. Upon spying the approaching craft, the men of the new settlement grabbed their weapons and rushed to the bank to identify the boatmen, for they were precariously situated on the very edge of the British empire, vulnerable to attack by hostile Spaniards and their Indian allies. The leader of the boat's crew, an ambitious and self-confident English aristocrat of thirty-seven years, gazed with pleasure

¹ J. P. MacLean, *An Historical Account of the Settlement of Scotch Highlanders in America*, (Baltimore, 1968) 152.

² James Hunter, *A Dance Called America: The Scottish Highlands, the United States, and Canada* (Edinburgh and London, 1994), 23-24; Larry E. Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier: The Military Colonization of Georgia, 1733-1749* (Chapel Hill, 1974), 53.

³ Ibid., 54; James Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 27 Feb. 1736, *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* 3, pt. 2 (1873), 15.

⁴ Ibid.

upon the men coming to meet him. "They were all under Arms upon seeing a Boat, and made a most manly appearance with their Plads, broad Swords, Targets [round, leather covered, wooden shields] & Fire Arms."⁵ He spent the night with the Scotsmen, disdaining the comfort of the "very good bed" offered him, instead adopting the "uncomprimisingly spartan lifestyle" of his Gaelic-speaking hosts by sleeping on the ground under a tree wrapped in the wool plaid "Highland habit" which his hosts had given him.⁶

In so doing, James Oglethorpe gained the respect of the settlers of Darien: Scottish Highlanders, recruited by Oglethorpe himself to leave their native glens and moors to settle in this desolate and dangerous corner of the vast British Empire. Enticed into occupying the northern bank of the Altamaha River to safeguard the new colony from Spanish aggression, they arrived in Georgia in January 1736 and immediately began building and fortifying their town. In a month's time, 177 men, women, and children, freeholders and indentured servants, had erected "a Battery of 4 pieces of Cannon . . . a Guard house a Store house a Chappel & several Hutts" which Oglethorpe inspected on his first visit.⁷ These Highlanders were used to working together, as most had come from the area around Inverness and were fellow clansmen. In Georgia they found themselves embroiled in the beginnings of a monumental struggle for colonial supremacy and would eventually play a significant part in this struggle and the violent early years of Georgia's history.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America* (Chicago, 1977), 27; Hunter, 24.

⁷ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 27 Feb. 1736, *CGHS* 3, 15.

Oglethorpe had realized the perilous situation on his southern border by 1735 and had determined to provide a bulwark against attack by Indians or Spaniards.⁸ Consumed as he was with defending the new colony, he abandoned somewhat his philanthropic stance and began to alter his notions of the ideal settler.⁹ In so doing, Oglethorpe began to focus more and more on military affairs and would soon concentrate his efforts on the settlements that could best defend themselves, to the detriment of the other settlements and to the agrarian equality ideal of the Trustees. The reality of the situation and the dire need for more defenses diverged from the original ideal. Oglethorpe had found that poor urban workers from London did not suit the need that the frontier environment made clear. As Benjamin Martyn, secretary for the Trustees, wrote, "many of the Poor who had been useless in England, were inclined to be useless likewise in Georgia."¹⁰

Oglethorpe persuaded the Trustees to petition Parliament for more funds to settle and secure the southern boundary of the colony. The Trustees agreed, apparently induced by the South Carolina Assembly's 1734 letter, as well as the Board of Trade's longstanding order to place two settlements on the Altamaha, which Carolina had ignored. Parliament granted the Trustees £26,000 sterling for the endeavor, and the Trustees, in turn, determined that "these Embarkations should consist chiefly of Persons from the Highlands of Scotland" and authorized Oglethorpe to recruit the needed settlers.¹¹ Although the Trustees as a body gave the final authorization, it is very likely that Oglethorpe himself had suggested the recruitment of Highlanders. Over the next several years more than two hundred individuals – men, women, and children, free and

⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁹ Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, 29.

¹⁰ "An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia," *CRG* 3, 387.

¹¹ Ibid.

indentured – would cross the ocean from the Highlands of Scotland to settle on the Altamaha. Recruited as soldier-settlers, the Highland men fulfilled their duty as guardians of the southern frontier. Closely allied with Indians with whom they shared much in common, the Scots participated in a short but bloody war with the Spanish that saved the colony but very nearly destroyed the Highlander settlement at Darien.

II

Recruiting individuals from the periphery of an empire and using them for military purposes on another periphery is a practice at least as old as ancient Rome, but why did Oglethorpe look to the Scottish Highlands for his "tribal levies?"¹² Most Englishmen considered Highlanders as savage as the Indians in America and thought they posed more of a threat to the empire than an asset. But Oglethorpe was one of the first Englishmen to see in Highlanders a valuable opportunity for the British imperial cause.

One of the possible reasons Oglethorpe turned to Highlanders was his well-known Jacobite connections. In addition to having flirted with Jacobitism himself in his youth, his mother was "an inveterate Jacobite plotter," and his sisters had married French aristocrats and exiled themselves to France "rather than risk the horrors of life in an England no longer controlled by the Stuarts."¹³

A more persuasive reason, however, was the Highlanders' reputation. Oglethorpe needed a homogeneous and tight-knit group of people able to survive in an isolated and harsh environment and capable of effective military action. Highlanders were hardy, warlike, reliable, and loyal to their leaders and fellow clansmen -- just the kind of people

¹² Hunter, *A Dance Called America*, 24.

¹³ Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, 2; Beyond political sentiments, Oglethorpe possessed a certain affinity for Highland culture, demonstrated by his purchase of a Gaelic grammar.

needed to safeguard the southern border. The harsh and uninviting Highland environment dictated the character of those living in it. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who traveled Scotland extensively, described the Highlands as haunted by the phantoms of "want, and misery, and danger."¹⁴ Universally barren, the region was not conducive to profitable agriculture or commerce, forcing much of the population to live in relative poverty.

Inhabitants were able to grow such imported American crops as corn and potatoes, but the Highland economy was based largely on subsistence level cattle herding -- a system known as *shieling*. In this system, families were responsible for tending their own cattle and producing butter, cheese, and, most of which was consumed by the family. Large cattle drives to market towns in the Lowlands or even across the border into England were not uncommon and often brought a fair profit to the families who contributed to the herd. Probably the largest Highland industry, however, was the timber industry. By the eighteenth century, the Highlands were becoming largely deforested in order to supply the Royal Navy with timber. The work patterns of both the cattle and timber industries closely followed, and were largely dictated by, the seasons; Highlanders were very attuned to their natural environment and relied more on natural signs than exact dates for their agricultural work.

The houses of commoners were often crude, small, and ill-furnished, and before 1720 the lack of roads suitable for carrying carriages and coaches through the mountains helped to isolate the region from the growing British economic and political system and kept the inhabitants "secluded from the rest of mankind." Highlanders, however, adapted well to their isolation. Describing the rugged landscape, Johnson said it was "the

¹⁴ Pat Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell in Scotland* (New Haven , 1993) 89.

consequence of a form of life inured to hardships, and therefore not studious of nice accommodations." He elaborated, remarking that Highlanders lacked "not only the elegancies, but the conveniences of common life."¹⁵ Apparently, this situation imbued pride in these people, for a Highlander writing to the Trustees claimed that his people were "used to hardships: what they reckon comforts are very simple."¹⁶

The Highlands not only encouraged hardiness in their inhabitants, they produced a violent tribal way of life. Johnson described how the mountainous terrain divided the people into "petty nations, which are made by a thousand causes enemies to each other. Each will exalt its own chiefs, each will boast the valour of its men . . . and every claim of superiority irritates competition; injuries will sometimes be done, and . . . retaliation will sometimes be attempted, and the debt exacted with too much interest."¹⁷ These "petty nations" or clans were "socially unified and militarily effective organization[s]" which had existed for centuries in the Highlands and were a combination of the ancient Celtic tribal system and Norman feudalism.¹⁸ Traditionally based upon kinship ties, by the early modern period the clan existed as a land-holding system centered on a chief who collected rent (often in the form of livestock) from tenants. These tenants, in turn, collected rent from sub-tenants -- crofters -- who held small strips of land for subsistence farming. Provided that the chief fulfilled his patriarchal duties of protecting and maintaining his clansmen, he enjoyed their submission, loyalty, and military service

¹⁵ Ibid., 69, 98, 117, 67.

¹⁶ Daniel McLachlan to the Trustees, 26 Feb. 1737, in K. G. Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Vol. XLIII*, (London, 1963), 112.

¹⁷ Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell in Scotland*, 94.

¹⁸ Margaret MacDonell, *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America*, (Toronto, 1982), 5, quoting James Hunter, name of work unknown.

whenever he deemed it necessary to defend against an external threat. Johnson alluded to such threats when he noted the frequency of inter-clan rivalry, wars, and invasions:

"Mountaineers are warlike, because by their feuds and competitions they consider themselves as surrounded with enemies, and are always prepared to repel incursions, or to make them . . . [they] soon consider all as enemies, whom they do not reckon as friends, and think themselves licensed to invade whatever they are not obliged to protect . . . Among a warlike people, the quality of highest esteem is personal courage."¹⁹

"Every person wished to be thought a soldier," and James Boswell, Johnson's Lowland Scots travelling companion, respected their courage, despite their "thoughtless inclination for war."²⁰ They employed the traditional weapons of the Highlands -- broadswords, bows, spears, dirks, axes, and targets -- and many gentlemen could use them with great skill; the commoners relied on violence, courage, and the fear they struck into the hearts of their enemies.

"[I]t is well known, that the onset of the Highlanders was very formidable. As an army cannot consist of philosophers, a panic is easily excited by any unwonted mode of annoyance. New dangers are naturally magnified; and men accustomed only to exchange bullets at a distance, and rather to hear their enemies than see them, are discouraged and amazed when they find themselves encountered hand to hand, and catch the gleam of steel flashing in their faces."²¹

Highlanders, therefore, seemed the perfect individuals to place in an isolated settlement along the Altamaha where armed conflict with the Spanish was inevitable. They were "ignorantly proud and habitually violent, unconnected with the general system, and accustomed to reverence only their own lords." Not only were they fearsome and effective warriors, they responded well to authority, as long as that authority was their own chief. The Georgian frontier environment would provide the Highlanders with

¹⁹ Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell in Scotland*, 139, 96.

²⁰ Grady McWhiney, *Celtic Culture in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, 1988) 151; Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell in Scotland*, 193, 82.

familiar surroundings, where their hardy adaptability and fighting skills would not grow dull. "For a campaign in the wastes of America, soldiers better qualified could not have been found."²²

III

"We are now in America,
In the shade of the never-ending forest"²³

Hoping to recruit several warlike Highlanders, Oglethorpe and the Trustees "ordered Mr. Hugh Mackay & Mr. [William] Dunbar to raise 100 Men free or servants and for that purpose allowed to them the free passage of ten servants over & above the 100. They farther allowed them to take 50 Head of Women & Children."²⁴ The freemen were to be "of Gentlemen's families and of good reputation, industrious, laborious, brave and speaking the Highland language."²⁵

The summer of 1735 proved a profitable time for those seeking emigrants from the Scottish Highlands. The combination of several factors -- economic, political, social, and cultural -- made emigration to America seem to gentleman and commoner alike a good idea indeed. Following the 1715 Jacobite Rising the new Hanoverian government sought to reduce the Jacobite threat by modernizing and commercializing Highland society and economy. The traditional Highland way of life became threatened by increased trade with the outside world, the building of military roads, the advent of a cash economy, and the government's efforts to undermine the traditional relationship between

²¹ Ibid., 210.

²² Ibid., 97, 187.

²³ Quoted from a poem by John Macrae (??-c1780), "Sleep Softly, My Darling Beloved," found in MacDonell, *The Emigrant Experience*, 43.

²⁴ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 13 Feb. 1736, *CGHS* 3, 10.

²⁵ David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607-178*, (Athens, Ga., 1994), 118-19.

chiefs and their clansmen by commuting rents to cash, making it difficult for cash-poor tenants to pay. Tenants began to regard their chief not as the traditional clan patriarch but as a landlord caught up in the new commercialization of the Highland economy; tenants were "caught between two conflicting ideologies of traditional culture with familiar expectations and modern commercialism with unknown pressures." They found their landholdings divided and rents increased. Migration, not only overseas but to Lowland and English cities, became a common response.²⁶ Further modernization came in the form of increased industry. In addition to expanding traditional timber and fishing industries, iron ore mining became widespread in certain regions.

Highland culture was directly attacked as well. A 1716 act of Parliament disarmed the clans, denying them their warrior tradition. And the newly formed Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge ambitiously sought to root out the Catholic and Gaelic "superstitions" practiced by many Highlanders. Gaelic Highlanders, then, felt their way of life threatened from all sides and saw emigration to America as an opportunity to preserve their culture, social structure, and economy.

Mackay and Dunbar recruited emigrants "according to the Custom of that Country." The "Custom" was to "bring the enterprise into vogue with the chief gentlemen," who then convinced members of the clan to join the emigration. Highlanders followed the instructions of their clan leaders and would not emigrate without their approval, nor without the companionship of their own people.²⁷ In fact, this clan structure proved an obstacle to Mackay's efforts since some chiefs did not want to lose rent-paying tenants. A second obstacle to recruiting concerned the Trustees'

²⁶ Anthony Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia: The Recruitment, Emigration, and Settlement at Darien, 1735-1748*, (Athens, Ga., 1997), 35.

insistence on inheritance by tail male, which prevented the traditional Highland allowance of inheritance by daughters and wives. Lastly, many Highlanders were aware of the practice of shanghaiing hapless young men by leading them to believe they were going to mainland America, when in reality they were destined for the sugar fields of Jamaica.

Mackay met with his largest success, not surprisingly, among his own clansmen in the county of Sutherland where the staunchly Hanoverian Mackays responded so willingly as to make up the majority of their kinsman's 71 recruits.²⁸ Dunbar, in contrast, spent his efforts recruiting among the large and renowned Jacobite Clan Chattan ("Clan of the Cat") near the town of Inverness, an area described as one of "most romantic and beautiful scenery" but holding "no possibility of cultivation."²⁹ Eventually this clan provided the majority of the emigrants, and gentlemen of the clan, particularly John Mohr (Big John) Mackintosh, assumed leadership of all the recruits, Hanoverian and Jacobite alike. The fact that these groups of starkly different political loyalties could serve together might lead one to conclude that Highlanders were actually fickle in their loyalty. The more accurate assessment, though, would be that these individuals were recruited for a specific purpose and, once they aligned themselves with that endeavor and its leaders, their primary loyalty now lay with it.

Chattan was an old clan, led since the thirteenth century by the chieftain of one of its seventeen septs (or tribes) -- Mackintosh.³⁰ The clan chief, therefore, was known as Mackintosh of Mackintosh and was apparently eager to send some of his kinsmen to

²⁷ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 13 Feb. 1736, *CGHS* 3, 10-11.

²⁸ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 42.

²⁹ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1769*, (Perth, 1979), 196-97.

Georgia to join his own brother, Aneas Mackintosh, already commander of a Carolina ranger company helping to defend the new Georgian settlements.

The Inverness town council perceived emigration to America as such a welcome opportunity that they made Oglethorpe an honorary burgess. And British authorities saw no objection, since Clan Chattan openly supported the Jacobite cause; sending them to Georgia would mean one less troublesome group of Highlanders to oppose Hanoverian rule.

In the end Mackay and Dunbar enlisted 163 individuals willing to leave their homes. Although the complete list of individuals in this group of Scottish emigrants does not survive, the names, ages, and occupations of several of the original Highland colonists do remain. The majority were young men in their late teens or twenties, although there were a number of families. A few were gentlemen; most were laborers, farmers, or servants indentured to the Trustees or to private gentlemen. The trades represented were apothecary, tailor, cooper, joiner, weaver, and surgeon.³¹ This demographic make-up fits well with the Trustees' ideal. Not only were most of the recruits young men capable of serving as soldiers, but the presence of women and children added a stabilizing element to the new community, while the range of occupations ensured that the Scottish settlement would be self-sufficient. One has to wonder, however, about the compatibility of the goals of establishing stable families and securing an effective military force. In retrospect, at least, the two proved mutually exclusive: the Highlanders succeeded in their purpose of providing a defense for Georgia but at the expense of the welfare of the Darien settlement. One has to be careful not to

³⁰ Frank Adam, *The Clans, Septs, and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands*, revised ed., (Edinburg, 1952), 208.

romanticize the Trustees' (or even Oglethorpe's) regard for the Highlanders, who were recruited specifically for defensive purposes and as such were probably viewed by the Trustees as expendable.³²

The recruits set sail aboard the *Prince of Wales* from Inverness in October 1735, no doubt feeling a twinge of sorrow as they watched their native hills fade in the distance. At the same time, they were setting forth on a grand adventure, in which "[t]he prospect of a noble fight for a worthy cause was incentive enough."³³ They arrived in Tybee Road, at the mouth of the Savannah River, in January 1736. Upon landing, a group of Carolinians tried to discourage them, warning that the Spaniards would shoot them before they could build their settlement. "Why then said the Highland men we will beat them out of their Fort & shall have Houses ready built to live in."³⁴ Apparently the new colonists had not lost their inclination for fighting or their bravado.

Several days passed before enough boats could be found to ferry the Highlanders down the Inland Passage to their new home on the Altamaha, which they named Darien, in honor of a failed Scottish settlement in Panama. The site was that of old Fort King George, abandoned nearly ten years earlier and lying in neglect since the Carolinians had refused to settle the area. According to Oglethorpe, the new settlers numbered 177, having added several after their original muster at Inverness. As allowed by the Trustees, 146 traveled on charity, while seventeen gentlemen paid their own way as well as the passage of some personal servants.

³¹ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, appendix B, 107-125.

³² Anthony Parker, in his work *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, fails to recognize this possibility.

³³ Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader* (Athens, Ga., 1992), 14.

³⁴ Oglethorpe to the Trustees 27 Feb. 1736, *CGHS* 3, 15.

The Highlanders were subject to the same rules as other Georgians. The freemen among them received fifty acres of land, and each servant received a promise of twenty acres upon completion of his indenture. The Trustees provided well for the servants, supplying them with food, clothing, and weapons, which must have been quite attractive to tenants barely surviving at home. But it is strange that the Trustees did not provide the Scots with any farming implements. The only tools specifically mentioned as going to the Highlanders were shovels and pickaxes -- tools better employed in building fortifications than growing corn. The Trustees were fooling themselves if they really expected the Scots to fend off the Spaniards and maintain successful family farms at the same time, especially with no provision for cheap labor (slaves were prohibited in Georgia).

Since the Highlanders were there specifically to serve as soldiers, and in the tradition of their people, they received muskets, broadswords, axes, and targets, as well as Highland plaids. During their first three weeks in Georgia, the Highlanders busied themselves building their new home. Upon the ruins of Fort King George, they constructed the battery, guard house, chapel, and huts that Oglethorpe reported on his first visit. And they soon became a central element in Oglethorpe's plans for defending the expanding colony.

In the early spring of 1736 a detail of thirty Highlanders and forty Yamacraws built Ft. St. Andrews on Cumberland Island, ten of the Scots remaining as the fort's garrison. Highlanders also garrisoned Ft. St. George on the St. John's River and Amelia Fort on Amelia Island, and the Darien militia under John Mohr Mackintosh built and garrisoned a fort at Darien. Highlanders also served Oglethorpe well as a display of

Georgia's military might and preparedness; they were conspicuously arrayed during a 1736 meeting between Oglethorpe and Florida's governor Don Manuel de Montiano. Oglethorpe was so pleased with the Scots' initial execution of duty that he asked the Trustees to authorize the settlement of more of the hardy "mountaineers."

In addition, the new Georgians immediately set to cultivating the land around their town and enjoyed a surplus corn crop the following autumn. Just as in Scotland, however, the base of their economy came to be cattle and timber. Martyn, the Trustees' secretary, wrote that "they raised, at first, a considerable Quantity of Corn. They feed . . . great numbers of cattle, and have many good sawyers, who make an advantageous trade of lumber." Oglethorpe also remarked on the Highlanders' productivity, calling them "most industrious" compared to the largely English population of Savannah, which was "most idle."³⁵

The Scots made an odd, yet colorful, addition to the American frontier. Most spoke only their native Gaelic, isolating them as a group from other Georgians and causing Oglethorpe to discover that he must deal with them through their own leader, John Mohr Mackintosh. They dressed in the traditional Highland plaid, twelve or fourteen feet of colorful wool worn skirted and belted at the waist, the remainder either draped over the shoulders in cold weather, pinned at the shoulder, or tucked into the belt for freedom of movement. The plaid, or *brechcan*, was one of the earliest common garments worn in the Highlands. The pattern and colors of the plaid were not, it seems, associated with clans or families but were determined by a combination of personal preference, locally available dyestuffs, and the discretion of the weaver. As one early

³⁵ Martyn, "An Impartial Enquiry into the State and Utility of the Province of Georgia," *CGHS I*; "Letters from General Oglethorpe," *CGHS* 3 pt. 2.

eighteenth-century observer wrote: "Every isle differs from each other in their fancy of making plads, as to the stripes in breadth and colours. This humour is as different through the mainland of the Highlands, in so far that they who have seen those places are able, at the first view of a man's plad, to guess the place of his residence."³⁶ Women commonly wore the *earasiad*, a white plaid with small stripes of black, blue, and red that reached from neck to heels.

The Highlanders also brought with them a rich culture of songs, stories, and Gaelic practices and beliefs that helped to further unify them and set them apart from their distant English neighbors. The Highlands had a long tradition of both written and oral folksong, in which all social strata shared, linking the top and bottom of society together in a common culture of values and social attitudes.³⁷ Gaels were an extremely poetic people; their oral culture reflected the prevailing attitudes of the time and were often inspired by Gaeldom-wide events. The most popular songs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were of a lyrical nature and often panegyric, passionate, tender, and personal in tone containing vivid imagery. Storytelling was central to the Highland culture. Parochial village stories and humor, often recited during the communal entertainment known as the *ceilidh*, were common and probably served to galvanize village communities and anchor their identities. Many of these stories were rooted deep in the traditions of Gaelic Ireland and Scotland and were composed by professional bards retained by chiefs to celebrate and glorify the chief's achievements. This solicitation of loyalty further solidified clan organization and coherence.

³⁶ Alexander MacDonald, *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*, (Inverness, 1914), 43.

³⁷ Derick S. Thomson, ed., *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, (Oxford, 1983), 80.

The Trustees no doubt recognized the solidarity and separateness of the Highlanders. The fact that they equipped the new colonists with traditional weapons and clothing demonstrated their desire for the Highlanders to maintain their distinct culture, particularly their fighting prowess. Oglethorpe, who certainly understood the value of unity and coherence in a frontier fighting force, would come to describe whites, Indians, and Highlanders as distinct categories of individuals.

The Highlanders were vulnerable to attack while they fashioned a defensible town out of the wilderness. To protect them, Oglethorpe sent a detachment of McPherson's Southern Rangers, who would also be responsible for keeping open the path between Savannah and Darien. It was now that the Highlanders experienced their first contact with some of the Indians with whom they were to be closely involved -- probably moreso than any whites -- over the next decade. Tomochichi, the Yamacraw chief, on his own initiative sent a group of his warriors to defend and otherwise assist their new neighbors. The Yamacraws apparently got on quite well with the Highlanders; they hunted for the Scots and helped to familiarize them with the surrounding country.³⁸ These Yamacraws were likely members of the two volunteer companies that Tomochichi had sent to Oglethorpe and had previously been attached to McPherson's rangers as "pathfinders," in addition to serving as scouts patrolling the Altamaha crossings.

The Highlanders would see a good deal of these Indians, whom Oglethorpe described as a "manly, well-shaped race." The initial friendliness between the two peoples should not have come as a surprise. As the Scots undoubtedly soon discovered, they had much in common with their new neighbors. They both valued hospitality to strangers, as Johnson and Boswell had discovered of the Highlanders and as Oglethorpe

observed of the Indians. He noted that they "are a generous, good-natured people; very humane to strangers; patient of want and pain; slow to anger, and not easily provoked, but, when they are thoroughly incensed, they are implacable."³⁹ Many Englishmen observed the same slow but violent temper in Highlanders.

The Highland clan system was not dissimilar to the Indians' tribal divisions and they both revered warrior prowess, courage, and honor, celebrating war through song, dance, and the recitation of past deeds. The war dance, which Oglethorpe witnessed during one of his visits to the Creek towns, incorporated this celebration. Warriors, decorated with skins, feathers, and paint, danced in a circle around tribesmen who sang and kept rhythm on their drums. At certain times, an individual warrior would command the others' attention as he sang of his own accomplishments in battle.⁴⁰ Indians and Europeans alike regarded Creeks as first-class warriors. They enjoyed the "leisure to engage in war, a very serious game that they played with religious fervor."⁴¹ War was so central an element of Creek social and religious culture that warriors often enjoyed an elevated position in tribal society; the most highly revered became the wealthiest in society and were granted the use of several lodges.⁴²

Creeks, like Highlanders, had a highly developed sense of honor and of right and wrong. Oglethorpe claimed that they "abhor[red] adultery," theft was unknown among them, and murder was considered the most heinous of crimes. But being a passionately

³⁸ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 55.

³⁹ "Oglethorpe's Account of Carolina and Georgia," in Thaddeus M. Harris, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of General Oglethorpe*, (Boston, 1841), 319.

⁴⁰ Francis Moore, "A Voyage to Georgia Begun in the Year 1735," *CGHS I*, 127.

⁴¹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 31.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41.

vengeful people, the Creeks did "not esteem the killing of an enemy, or one that has injured them, murder." This type of revenge fit the Creek definition of honor and duty.⁴³

Both peoples also participated in similar types of local economy, combining subsistence agriculture with the hunting of wild game. Most eighteenth-century Europeans, accustomed to seeking a profit, could not understand this subsistence existence and lack of "industry" common among Indians. Similar to the commonly held English opinion of Highlanders, European colonists often remarked on the laziness and poverty of the Indians they encountered.⁴⁴

Before long, a group of curious Creek warriors visited the Darien settlement and according to Oglethorpe, the two peoples "agree[d] very well" with one another.⁴⁵ William Mackintosh, son of John Mohr, even remarked that "the Indians were greatly attached to the Highlanders, not only as their being soldiers of their beloved man, General Oglethorpe, but because of their wild manners, of their manly sports, of their eastern costume, so much resembling their own."⁴⁶ This "eastern costume" may have been a reference to the mantles worn by many of the Creek men, which Oglethorpe compared to the togas of ancient Romans. The growing respect between them even resulted in Scots and Creeks competing in a version of Highland games.⁴⁷

The newcomers likely did not realize that Indians rarely, if ever, engaged in athletic contests that held no ritual significance. Sports were often connected to healing, climate, hunting, battle, fertility, or to determine the superiority of one god over another.

⁴³ Oglethorpe letter, 9 June 1733, in Harris, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of General Oglethorpe*, 359.

⁴⁴ John Pitts Corry, *Indian Affairs in Georgia, 1732-1756*, (Philadelphia, 1936), 35.

⁴⁵ Oglethorpe to the Trustees, 13 Feb. 1736, *CGHS* 3, 12.

⁴⁶ "A Sketch of the Life of General James Oglethorpe," *CGHS* 1, 271.

⁴⁷ Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 17.

As Joseph Oxendine, a renowned expert on Indian sport, states: "the outcome [of various contests] was assumed to be influenced by a power beyond the control of the participants."⁴⁸ Who knows the outcomes of these contests between Scots and Creeks? If the Highlanders were victorious, perhaps they earned the respect, admiration, and religious subordination of the Creeks, which might partly explain the good relations between the peoples. Or perhaps the Creeks were frequent winners, convincing them that their opponents were not a threat but potentially worthy allies in the fight against Creek enemies.

The Highlanders' new Creek friends also informed them of the danger and vulnerability of their situation. The Creeks' descriptions of the Spaniards and their Indian allies at St. Augustine and of the numerous French settlements and fortifications, as well as growing French influence among the Upper Creeks, revealed to the newcomers their precarious position. They found themselves in the middle of an intensifying international struggle for supremacy in North America. Oglethorpe was in the process of establishing his main garrison force at Frederica on nearby St. Simon's Island, but the fort built there would not be sufficiently occupied for two years. Until then, the closest source of European aid and support lay with the various ranger companies scattered about the region.

The Highlanders soon discovered that, in times of peace as well as war, their new Indian friends were their most immediate companions and allies. The two peoples would find themselves living, working, and fighting side-by-side. Even before the Darien

⁴⁸ In 1636 the Jesuit missionary Jean de Brebeuf noted that among the Hurons games of lacrosse, in which all young men had a duty to participate, were often played in order to prevent terrible misfortune. Joseph Oxendine, *American Indian Sports Heritage*, (Champaign, Illinois, 1988), 6-7.

settlers arrived Scotsmen and Indians interacted on several occasions. McPherson, who himself had contact with Indians much of his life as a Carolina militiaman and ranger, employed Yamacraw warriors as pathfinders for his Southern Rangers, who adopted much of the Indians' style of dress and operation. These rangers and Indians worked together in scouting a location for Ft. Argyle in 1733, and the Yamacraw volunteer companies, under a warrior named Skee, frequently visited the fort for rest, food, liquor, trade, and entertainment.⁴⁹ Patrick Mackay learned a great deal about Creek culture during his controversial 1734 expedition to the Upper Creek towns. This party also likely included a number of Yamacraw warriors serving as hunters, guides, and scouts.

After the Darien settlers' arrival, Highlanders and Indians were involved in activities other than athletic contests. In 1739 Oglethorpe led an expedition to some of the Lower Creek towns in an attempt to secure their allegiance or neutrality in the inevitable conflict with the Spanish. Just as he had done during the previous year's summit with Florida's governor Montiano, Oglethorpe brought with him several Scots, mostly gentlemen, including Lt. George Dunbar, Adjutant Hugh Mackay, Jr., and Aneas Mackintosh. This group soon rendezvoused with Lt. John Cuthbert, his six rangers (probably all Scots), and a group of Indian hunters and guides. At Coweta and Kashita, the party engaged in talks and occasionally joined their Indian hosts in ceremonial dances.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that Oglethorpe included in his party some of the Highlanders with whom the Creeks agreed so well, the Indians refused to promise the general the large numbers of warriors he hoped for. The most he received was assurance of the Creeks' neutrality in any colonial conflict.

⁴⁹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

IV

The long-anticipated showdown with Spain began in October 1739, just days after Oglethorpe returned from the Lower Creek towns. Many on both sides had expected war to break out earlier. Tensions had reached the boiling point in 1737 when the Spaniards demanded that the British remove their military complex -- the Darien settlement, Ft. Frederica, and the several other forts dotting the islands south and east of Darien -- from Florida's doorstep. The Spanish king had ordered the governor of Cuba to prepare an invasion force to completely destroy Georgia. This force of over one thousand men was on the verge of sailing in early 1738 when the king sent an order canceling the plan; negotiations between the two nations had produced a promise to settle the boundary dispute. This promise was never peacefully fulfilled.

Although Britain's settlement in Georgia had pushed Spain to the brink of war, it was the British Parliament that made the formal declaration of war. The spark was provided by an incident involving an English smuggler, Robert Jenkins. The Spanish captured Jenkins and to punish him cut off his ear, which he preserved and presented to an outraged Parliament that immediately declared war. The conflict, dubbed the War of Jenkin's Ear, was a prelude to the War of Austrian Succession and was fought almost entirely on the Georgia frontier.⁵¹ Oglethorpe had, of course, been preparing for this moment for several years. In addition to erecting the forts guarding the Georgia coast and Inland Passage, the energetic general had returned to England in 1737 at the height of tensions, where he recruited a regular army regiment -- the 42nd Regiment of Foot -- for service in Georgia. He hoped the 42nd would provide a disciplined core for Georgia's provincial army, which consisted mostly of Highlanders and Indians not known for

conventional European discipline or methods of fighting. Oglethorpe stationed companies of the 42nd at Ft. St. Andrews, Delegal's Ft., and at Frederica on St. Simon's Island, placing one company under the command of the trusted Highland gentleman Hugh Mackay, Sr. Unhappy with being transferred from their comfortable garrison post on Gibraltar to the dangerous American frontier, a large number of the soldiers at Frederica mutinied in the fall of 1738. Oglethorpe and his officers, protected by loyal Highlanders with drawn broadswords, bravely stood down the mutineers and preserved the coherence of Georgia's defense force.⁵²

The Darien Highlanders, too, were prepared for war with their hostile southern neighbors. Forty more settlers -- nearly all male servants of the Trustees -- had arrived from Scotland in November 1737 aboard the *Two Brothers*. On the same ship the Trustees sent 300 yards of tartan for shortcoats and hose, 1,200 yards of tartan for plaids, 12 spinning wheels, and 300 pairs of shoes. Recognizing that war with the Spanish was a real possibility, they also sent "100 muskets and bayonets, 200 Indian arms . . . musket bullets . . . Indian gun bullets . . . lead, one pair of bullet moulds of 9 holes each for the musket bore, and two iron ladles."⁵³ The men and equipment were much needed. As early as April 1737 Darien militiamen had exchanged musketfire with a Spanish raiding party on Amelia Island and outside of Darien.⁵⁴

When war was formally declared, Highlanders -- true to their warlike nature -- rushed to join two exclusively Scottish units authorized by Oglethorpe. The first was the 29-man Troop of Highland Rangers, commanded by Hugh Mackay, Jr., who also held a

⁵¹ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 75.

⁵² Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 83.

⁵³ K. G. Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, America and West Indies, Vol. XLIII*, (London, 1963), 1737.220, p.113.

commission as adjutant of the 42nd. These Scottish horsemen were outfitted with broadswords, dirks, pistols, and sawed-off muskets. Initially they wore plaids and bonnets, but within six months had been issued shirts, breeches, shoes, stockings, hats, and blankets. The second and larger unit was the Highland Independent Company of Foot. It took John Mohr Mackintosh only five hours to recruit this infantry unit from the men of Darien and although he was authorized to recruit 115 men, he exhausted the potential pool of recruits at seventy. They, too, dressed in plaids, and carried muskets, broadswords, and dirks.⁵⁵ These Highlanders would serve as the backbone of the colony's forces in the coming war. Serving alongside English and Indian comrades, they were involved from beginning to end and played pivotal roles during both major campaigns.

Oglethorpe often combined Indian and Highland warriors for duties that required a mobile force capable of quick and ferocious attacks. The Highlanders' reputation for reckless but viciously effective charges and their ability to move quickly in small groups over rough terrain suited them for the job. The natives' tactics and style of fighting, as Oglethorpe had learned, bore many similarities to those of their Gaelic allies, and their knowledge of the local terrain and geography made them invaluable members of scouting and raiding parties. Not surprisingly, Indian warriors, like Highlanders, had little regard for formal British military discipline. British authorities had difficulty predicting and controlling their "wild" Indian allies, who had such a high regard for fighting that "sensing war in the air, [they] began committing outrages" against the Spanish as early as 1738.⁵⁶ During the war Oglethorpe expressed his displeasure at the Indian custom of

⁵⁴ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 69.

⁵⁵ Ivers., *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 100-01.

⁵⁶ Corry, *Indian Affairs in Georgia*, 119.

torturing prisoners and on one occasion even ransomed captive Spaniards with some of Georgia's precious horses.⁵⁷

As Patrick Mackay learned during his 1734 expedition, Creek warriors and their Yamacraw cousins were typical of local Indians in operating most effectively in small, independent raiding parties. One of Oglethorpe's lieutenants noted that "Indians were useful for fighting against the Spanish Indians and for ravaging Spanish farms, but they were of no use in besieging a town as regular troops, and would storm a breach only when the way was led by the English."⁵⁸ Indians often attempted surprise night attacks on enemy camps by sneaking up, some of the attackers firing muskets and rushing in with hatchets, while others hold their fire until they are among the enemy. Similar to the Highland charge, this method of attacking maximized the attackers' advantage and the victims' terror; at times Indian attackers became so enraged that they were in danger of killing before identifying their victims.⁵⁹ The British soon discovered that, like Highlanders, Indians were most effective when commanded by one of their own. For much of the 1740 campaign against St. Augustine, the half-Indian Thomas Jones commanded a sizable Indian contingent.

The Highlanders in Oglethorpe's army saw action early. In fact, the first two casualties of the war were Highlanders, indentured servants ambushed and beheaded by Spanish-allied Yamasees as they gathered wood for the garrison at Amelia Fort. The first British offensive move was a December 1739 raiding party of 200 men, consisting of Highland and other rangers, regulars, militia, and Indians. (Oglethorpe did not receive the 2,000 Indian warriors he had requested. He had a tendency, even when dealing with

⁵⁷ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 148.

⁵⁸ Corry, *Indian Affairs in Georgia*, 126.

fellow Englishmen, to request much more than was reasonable with the expectation of getting what he truly needed. In the end about 200 Indians, mostly Cherokees and Uchees, with a few Lower Creeks, Yamacraws, and Chickasaws fought for the British in the first campaign of the war.) This party did little damage, but succeeded in scouting the territory north of St. Augustine.

Oglethorpe's first major offensive took place the next month and was aimed at capturing Ft. Pupo on the west bank of the St. John's River eighteen miles west of St. Augustine, which controlled a communication route between the town and the Spanish stronghold of Apalachee. The attack force of 180 included the Troop of Highland Rangers, Indians, and a detachment of the 42nd, which manned four small cannon. In an effective use of manpower, Oglethorpe sent the fast-moving Highlanders and Indians ahead to scout the way. Once across the river they engaged Ft. Pupo's defenders in a brisk skirmish that lasted the entire afternoon, while the redcoats erected a battery in the woods near the fort. The skirmishers did their job well; the Spanish were unaware of the cannon until the crews began to send solid shot smashing into the fort's walls. The defenders surrendered after only two volleys from the British guns and Oglethorpe left a detachment of Highlanders to garrison what was now Georgia's southernmost outpost. The Highlanders and their Indian comrades had proven their worth and their ability to work together effectively.

Oglethorpe realized that the time for attacking St. Augustine and its protective Castillo de San Marcos was upon him. The town's defenses were weak, its inhabitants terrified, he had the support of the Royal Navy, 200 Indian allies, and South Carolina, and King George II had ordered him to capture the Spanish town. He made his

⁵⁹ Moore, "A Voyage to Georgia," *CGHS I*, 126.

preparations quickly; the small fleet of British warships would have to leave for more sheltered waters before the June hurricane season. After capturing Ft. Diego -- twenty miles north of St. Augustine -- without a fight, Oglethorpe and nearly 1,000 regulars, Georgians, South Carolinians, Highlanders, and Indians made their way overland south toward St. Augustine, confident of victory. It was to be a combined land-sea operation with the British forces attacking from both the north and east. During the march, as before, Oglethorpe used Highlanders and Indians as scouts and raiders. Indian raiding parties succeeded in driving Spanish plantation owners into St. Augustine and in cutting off communication and supply routes.

The unexpected presence of six Cuban half-galleys in St. Augustine's harbor disrupted the British plan and caused Oglethorpe to make a revision that likely cost the British the battle. In order to prevent the Spaniards from foraging north of town, Oglethorpe drew together a "flying party" whose mission it was to patrol the area north of town around Ft. Mosa, staying mobile and never spending more than one night in any particular location. This party consisted of Oglethorpe's lightest-equipped, most mobile, and most trusted troops: rangers, Highlanders, and Indians, with a core of disciplined redcoats.

The "flying party" never got off the ground. Hugh Mackay, Jr., the senior officer in effective command, and Colonel John Palmer, a South Carolina militia volunteer, constantly argued over the proper disposition of the mixed party. As a result, the elite force did not carry out their duties to their full potential. They never left Ft. Mosa and soon settled into a routine. After less than a week at their post, Spanish troops and Yamasee Indians launched a successful dawn surprise attack on the demoralized and

unorganized British party. During the swift and confusing battle, the bulk of the Highlanders attempted to defend the fort's gate, successfully repulsing two Spanish charges. William Stephens reported of this valiant stand that the Highlanders "made such havoc with their broadswords, as the Spanish cannot easily forget."⁶⁰ The Spanish onslaught proved too much, however. The Highlanders had left their bayonets and targets behind to lighten their load and as their numbers dwindled the broadswordsmen became vulnerable to the well-disciplined Spaniards' bayonet charges.

In the end sixty-three of the 137-man British force lay dead and twenty were taken captive, including John Mohr Mackintosh. The Highland units had suffered as heavily as any other, losing two-thirds of the Independent Company and nearly one-half of the rangers. Survivors of the disaster found their way back to the army's main body. The defeat at Ft. Mosa cost Oglethorpe dearly and, unable to maintain his early advantage, he withdrew the army three weeks later. Had Oglethorpe been clearer as to who was in official command of the "flying party," Mackay or Palmer, things might have been different. The constant bickering between the two -- and the Highlander's stubbornness -- had allowed the party to become lazy and ineffective. Remaining immobile in one place for several days without an effective and inspirational leader, the Highlanders and Indians were not used to the greatest advantage.

After the unsuccessful invasion of Florida, Georgia's surviving Highland soldiers, defeated and bloodied but still dangerous, were scattered among the various frontier forts in an effort to regroup and prepare for the inevitable Spanish counterattack. Still held in high regard by Oglethorpe, the Scots resumed their familiar duties as scouts, raiders, and messengers. The Troop of Highland Rangers, under Hugh Mackay, Jr., was divided

⁶⁰ Harris, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of General Oglethorpe*, 236.

between Ft. St. Andrews and Darien. The Highland Independent Company of Foot had lost its commander and only numbered sixteen men by May 1741, having been decimated by disease and the Spanish at Ft. Mosa. Later that year the addition of fifteen new recruits from Scotland bolstered the company's ranks, once again making it a valuable and effective force.

The opportunity for the British to avenge their 1740 defeat came two years later with the expected Spanish invasion of Georgia. In the young colony's most desperate hour, General Oglethorpe would prove to be an inspirational field commander and would turn to his trusted Highland men and their Indian allies to turn back the Spanish tide.

The 1,950 Spanish invaders -- regulars, dragoons, artillerymen, provincials, militiamen, and Yamasees -- had one objective: to utterly destroy Georgia and leave it a barren wasteland. The Spaniards drove for the very heart of the colony, running a weak British blockade and landing the invasion force on the southern tip of St. Simon's Island. They intended to destroy the main British garrison at Frederica before continuing north into South Carolina. As the Spaniards marched north toward Frederica, British inhabitants, including the Scots at Darien, were thrown into a panic and fled for the relative safety of Savannah and Ft. Argyle. Even Carolinians just north of the Savannah River sought shelter from what was shaping up to be the realization of one of their worst nightmares. Oglethorpe quickly gathered his forces at Frederica. The Highland company and rangers were called from the mainland to join several Creeks, Chickasaws, and Yamacraws, as well as the 42nd regiment. In all, Oglethorpe could muster only five hundred men, very little artillery, and no men-of-war to face the invading army.

On 7 July 1742 a Spanish reconnaissance force came to within 1.5 miles of Frederica before it was discovered by a small ranger patrol which, after briefly skirmishing with the enemy, retreated to Frederica to inform Oglethorpe. The general sprang into action, ordering the Highland company, rangers, and a group of Indians to follow him and engage the approaching enemy in the woods, before they reached open ground where they could form ranks and overwhelm the British with numbers. The Highlanders and Indians responded brilliantly. Screaming their various war cries, the fastest afoot of the defenders charged headlong into the leading elements of the Spanish column in "what could only be termed a full Highland charge."⁶¹ Crashing into the weary Spaniards with broadswords, dirks, and war-clubs, the defenders-turned-attackers broke the column's advance. The main body, terrified by the ferocity of the un-European-like attack, turned and fled into the woods. Thirty-six Spaniards lay dead or wounded, while a single Highlander perished from heat exhaustion.

Eager to press his advantage, Oglethorpe organized the Highlanders, Indians, and reinforcements from the 42nd in preparation for a Spanish counterattack and then turned back to Frederica to hasten the arrival of more troops. It was all over before he reached his destination. Having regrouped, the Spanish continued their advance, but were stopped by withering musket fire from the Highlanders, Indians, and English hidden behind hastily-built breastworks in the woods. The Spaniards' return volleys panicked three platoons of the 42nd, which fled the scene. The remaining platoon of redcoats joined its comrades in forcing the Spanish to retreat, causing Oglethorpe to remark, "We

⁶¹ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 90.

have some Satisfaction for the Blood at Moosa. The white people[,] Indians, and the Highlanders all had their share in the Slaughter."⁶²

The latter two groups had again proven that their similar styles of fighting -- quick, mobile, and ferocious -- lent well to cooperative action. Together the Gaels and Indians had nearly single-handedly repulsed an overwhelmingly superior force of Spaniards, which, unchecked, might have destroyed Georgia and South Carolina, changing the course of American history.

The Battle of Bloody Marsh, as this skirmish came to be called, was the last major action of the War of Jenkin's Ear. The Spanish threat subsided and only a few small-scale British raids took place in the following few years. The first bloody chapter of Georgia's history was coming to a close, and with it, the Highlanders' role as guardians of the southern border. In September 1744 a royal warrant placed Georgia's provincial troops -- including 115 Highlanders -- in the king's pay, retroactive to September 1743. The Highland Rangers remained a separate unit and were divided between Ft. St. Andrews and Darien. John Mohr Mackintosh returned from captivity in Spain to resume command of the Highland Independent Company, which received as reinforcements from England thirty mutineers of the regular Royal Highland Regiment of Foot in 1743. Despite these newcomers the company was still only at half-strength (52 privates) in 1746 and found itself used for patrol duty but no offensive operations.

Oglethorpe himself returned to England after the failed Spanish invasion of Georgia, where he remained for the rest of his life. He gradually lessened his

⁶² Ibid., 91.

connections to Georgia and eventually resigned from the Trustees before the colony reverted to the crown in 1750. Ironically, the general who had led Jacobites in battle -- and had even worn the Highland plaid -- commanded a brigade of British troops charged with capturing Prince Charles Stuart during the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. He suspiciously allowed the Bonnie Prince to escape, however, which effectively ended his military career.

Although King George's War (the culmination of the War of Jenkin's Ear) did not officially end until 1748, Georgia's 400 provincials were disbanded in 1747. Until then, soldiering had been the single largest occupation in the colony, and these men's return to full-time civilian life placed a strain on the already depressed Georgia economy. Many of the fortified settlements south of the Savannah were abandoned; only Savannah, Augusta, and Darien survived.

CONCLUSION

Did the town of Darien meet the Trustees' goal of a settlement of yeomen farmers with a hoe in one hand and a musket in the other? Certainly the Darien Scots proved their worth as warriors and successfully defended their new home, but what was the effect of the frequent fighting on the settlement itself? How was the town able to survive?

The first group of Scots settlers in 1736 succeeded in producing a substantial crop of corn in their first year. In fact, observers of the new settlement often remarked on the prosperity and progress of the Scots. The Earl of Egmont wrote that they were "extraordinary industrious" and another observer, in a letter to the Trustees, commented how the Scots were "very forward in their settlement at Darien."¹ Due to the inadequacies of the soil near Darien, however, the Highlanders soon had to turn to Savannah for assistance in feeding themselves. From that point on, cattle and timber became the main industries of the region; throughout the Trustees' rule the large number of soldiers in the region provided a healthy market for beef and lumber.

The almost immediate demand for soldiers -- even before fighting broke out -- placed a severe drain on the manpower of Darien, making it difficult to maintain either family farms or the industries of the region. By 1737, the need for men to build forts and to serve on militia patrols prompted Oglethorpe to send for the second group of

¹ Robert MacPherson, ed. *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont: Abstracts of the Trustees' Proceedings for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, 1732-1738*, (Athens, 1962), 217; John Brownfield to the Georgia Trustees, 6 March, 1736, in Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 56.

Highlander recruits who arrived aboard the *Two Brothers* in November. The drain on Darien's inhabitants also prompted Benjamin Martyn to write that the need for defense "drew the People off from their Labor in the Sowing Season . . . and they were obliged to make Preparations for their Defense."² The Earl of Egmont predicted that the "pressures of continual preparedness combined with limited provisions could cause a civil revolt among the settlers."³ On two occasions this prediction nearly came true when the Darien Highlanders threatened to leave Georgia for South Carolina.

The first of these near desertions came in 1738. The freeholders of Darien raised several complaints to Oglethorpe in the summer of that year: growing debts for supplies, hardships brought on by the system of land tenure, lack of credit, and the brutal and arbitrary rule of Mackintosh and Mackay, who were probably competing for control of the settlement. They demanded a public store be established in Darien. Oglethorpe, instead of lose his valuable Highlanders to Carolina, consented to their demands. The Trustees blamed not the Darien Highlanders for the discontent in the colony, but a group of disgruntled English and Lowland Scots in Savannah, known as the "Malcontents," who filed a petition with the Trustees demanding changes in land tenure and the allowance of slave labor in the colony. Oglethorpe, knowing these demands were completely counter to the ideal of the Trustees, used the Highlanders' position to his advantage. In exchange for loans, an extension of credit, and a public store, Oglethorpe convinced the Darien men to sign their own counterpetition in opposition to slavery. They did and disaster was averted.

² Martyn, "An Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia," *CGHS* 3, 207.

³ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 69.

Trouble surfaced again the next year. Darien inhabitants charged Mohr Mackintosh with mismanagement of the Trust store and with hoarding the best provisions for himself while distributing bad corn and rotten cheese to the settlers.⁴ They again planned to move as a group to Carolina, but the declaration of war interrupted their plans and they threw themselves into the work of defending their new home.

The Highlanders had obviously not left the hardship of life in Scotland to be exploited in America and took necessary steps to provide for their own welfare. It is interesting that in one moment they were willing to abandon Georgia and in the next they were flocking to defend her; in one moment they were complaining about the rule of Mackintosh and Mackay and in the next were following them loyally into battle. These actions are a testimony to the traditions of Highlanders. They were fiercely independent and concerned for their well being, while at the same time deeply loyal to their leaders and comrades. Oglethorpe had recruited the right group of individuals.

With the coming of war and the Battle of Ft. Mosa, the Darien settlement suffered its hardest days. In fact, it nearly died completely. Most of the men of the town had joined the two Highland units, and the majority of them were killed or captured at Ft. Mosa, leaving Darien full of widows and orphans with no one to work the land, cattle, or sawmills. The defeat at Ft. Mosa was blamed for "putting an end to the settlement of Darien; for there are now in that place not one quarter of the number who settled there at first, and that is made up mostly of women and children."⁵ By October 1740 the casualties at Ft. Mosa and the defection to Carolina of several families left only fifty-

⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁵ Patrick Tailfer, Hugh Anderson, and David Douglas, "A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America from the First Settlement Thereof until This Present

three of approximately 250 settlers. Assistance was on its way from the Trustees, however, who once again looked to the Scottish Highlands for more recruits to revive Darien and to replenish the ranks of the decimated Highland units.

Forty-three new recruits aboard the *Loyal Judith* arrived in Georgia in September 1741. Many of these new immigrants were Mackays, but much like the group that arrived in 1737, they represented several different clans. The provisions supplied by the Trustees tell much about their expectations for the continuing survival of Darien and Georgia. Unlike the first group of Highlanders in 1736, these Scots received an abundance of tools suited for farming and the timber industry.⁶ The Trustees reaffirmed their commitment to establishing a secure colony of farmers, as difficult as that had proven to be to accomplish. Furthermore, the Trustees altered the system of land tenure from tail male to tail general, allowing women to inherit. The Highlanders had proven themselves so valuable that the Trustees adapted their plans to the settlers' wishes.

The experience of the Highlander community of Darien proves the conflicting nature of the Trustees' goals for these earliest Georgians. With defense as top priority it was quite difficult for the men and women of Darien to successfully establish themselves as yeomen farmers. Although the men of Darien served the British Empire successfully by helping preserve the young colony, the time they spent away from their homes was time in which the settlement suffered greatly. Only between periods of heightened military intensity and after the War of Jenkin's Ear were the hardy inhabitants of Darien able to establish themselves securely. The survival of Darien speaks not only to the resourcefulness and hardiness of its Scottish inhabitants, but also to the determination of

Period" in *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms and Defenses of the Colony of Georgia, 1741-1743*. Edited by Trevor R. Reese, (Savannah, 1973), 104.

the Trustees, their recognition of the value of having the Scots on the frontier, and their willingness to adapt their plans to the needs of those colonists.

After Georgia reverted to the crown and began to grow, Darien gradually lost its character as an isolated and self-contained community of Gaelic-speaking Scots. Slavery was introduced to Georgia in 1750 leading to the development of huge rice plantations along the coast. Many of the Darien Scots who had opposed slavery in 1739 became the largest land- and slaveowners in the colony. And when the American Revolution broke out in 1775 the majority of Scots and Scottish-Americans in the region chose to rebel against the government for which they had fought so well three decades before. Those who remained loyal to the crown had their lands confiscated by the victorious United States government.

II

The town of Darien exists to this day; some two hundred of its 1,788 inhabitants claim direct descent from the original colonists and still celebrate their Highland heritage.⁷ Their forebears certainly deserve to be celebrated. Not only did they possess the courage and loyalty to one another to leave their homeland and settle in an untamed, hostile, and unfamiliar environment, but they proved that they were the hardy, warlike, and resourceful people that James Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees thought they were. Recruited for a specific purpose, they met Oglethorpe's and the Trustees' expectations by remaining an isolated and culturally distinct group that proved its warlike reputation was well deserved. And despite periods of discontent and protest that

⁶ Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia*, 84-85.

⁷ Ibid., 99.

threatened the survival of Darien and of Georgia, the Darien Highlanders proved invaluable to the establishment of the colony.

It may be impossible to know the impressions the American frontier environment had on these Highlanders since most did not speak English and were almost certainly illiterate. Frequent contact with Indians and the nearly constant state of alarm surely altered the Scots' long-held traditions in a way that added to the culture of these new Americans. One can only wonder at the influence these two groups – natives of worlds an ocean apart – had on one another's culture. A popular Scottish-American poem of the late eighteenth century, however, provides a glimpse at the Scots' perspective:

We've become Indians surely enough.
Skulking under trees, not one of us will be left alive,
with wolves and beasts howling in every lair⁸

The Scots, in turn, added something great to American tradition and history. Without their constant vigilance, resilience, and effectiveness in battle, the history of the American southeast might be quite different indeed.

⁸ Macrae, "Sleep Softly, My Darling Beloved," in MacDonell, *The Emigrant Experience*, 43.

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